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AFRICAN BIRD CLUB

Bulletin of the African Bird Club

Vol 22 No 2 September 2015

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n Bird Club

birds and conservation in Africa

The African Bird Club—working for birds and conservation in Africa

We are the charity dedicated to the conservation of birds across Africa. We work with people in Africa providing support for the study of birds and conservation with the aim of improving the status of both migratory and resident species.

We work with individuals and local groups throughout Africa supporting and promoting:

- Conservation projects with a focus on researching, monitoring and protecting African birds
- Conservation education
- Surveys and assessments of lesser-known regions
- The effective communication of information about African birds

Registered Charity No 1053920

ABC Membership

Membership is open to all. Annual subscription rates are:

Individual	Europe & Africa: UK£21	Rest of the World: UK£23
Family	Europe & Africa: UK£24	Rest of the World: UK£26
Student	Europe & Africa: UK£12	Rest of the World: UK£14
Supporting	UK£35 minimum	
Life	UK£500	

To join or for further details please visit the ABC website (where there are secure online payment facilities) or write to the Membership Secretary—see contact information below.

ABC Website

http://www.africanbirdclub.org

Photographers and artists

ABC is always looking for drawings and photos to publish in the Bulletin. If you are interested in contributing, please contact the Graphics Editor, Lionel Sineux, lionel.sineux@gmail.com

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The Bulletin of the African Bird Club

The Bulletin of the ABC provides a forum for news, letters, notices, recent publications, expedition results, reviews and publication of studies on African birds by contributors from throughout the world. Publication of results in the Bulletin of the ABC does not preclude publication of final results as journal papers either by the ABC or elsewhere. No material should, however, be submitted simultaneously to the Bulletin of the ABC and to any other publication.

Brief notes for contributors appear elsewhere in this Bulletin and further details are available from the Editor (editor@africanbirdclub.org).

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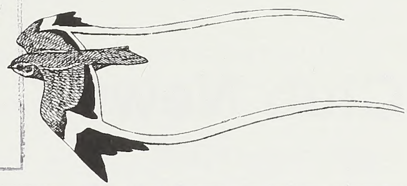

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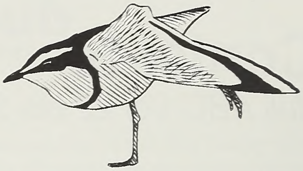


Compiled by Richard Charles

A message from the incoming Chairman

At the AGM in April 2015 I was elected as your Chairman, succeeding Keith Betton who had served the Club in this role with tireless distinction for the previous seven years. The notion of replacing Keith is spurious—he is irreplaceable—and Council unanimously felt that we needed to mark his singular contribution by inviting him to become our second Vice President, joining Martin Woodcock. It is my first and pleasant duty to report that he has accepted, so we shall retain his knowledge and counsel when we need it.

My own accession to the Chair might be regarded as displaying undue haste. I became a member of ABC in 2012, almost immediately becoming Corporate Sponsors' Officer, then Vice Chairman. My learning curve has been steep and is continuing—one can never stop learning. It also means that one is reliant upon the support and wisdom of immediate Council colleagues, which I am grateful to have received throughout, and dependent upon the confidence of you, our members. I shall work hard to earn and retain that confidence during my tenure.

My ornithological background is that of the keen amateur, developed around the Sussex countryside with my father during early boyhood. Demands upon time were inevitably keen during my medical training and career in cardiology, but it was while working at Groote Schuur Hospital in Cape Town in the 1980s that I had the chance to develop a passion for African birds. Many subsequent visits to southern and East Africa, latterly concentrating on bird ringing, have served to cement a love of the continent, its incomparable countryside, people and wildlife, which I know you all share with me. ABC serves as a wonderful vehicle for translating our passion into practical action, working—in the words of our strapline—for birds and conservation in Africa.

What do I hope to bring to my tenure as Chairman? Firstly, without its members a club is dead. A priority must be to retain and expand our membership, recognising that the digital age means that many, especially younger, potential members satisfy their communal needs online, presenting a challenge to the traditional club model. The enthusiasm of existing members is the best recruiting sergeant, and I entreat you to get your friends of similar interest to join us. As we work towards an online version of the Bulletin, it will be Council's intention to offer free e-membership within Africa. Our Bulletin and the website are invaluable resources that we can promote with pride as 'best in class'. Secondly, at the heart of ABC is its Conservation Fund. I reiterate the Club's thanks to all of the generous individuals, and our Corporate Sponsors, who have contributed to it. We shall work hard to grow that fund in order to support more researchers and projects in Africa, as well as major investments such as our contribution of UK£25,000 towards the land lease in the Taita Hills described in the last issue of the Bulletin. Thirdly, the Club cannot stand still and during 2014 Council undertook a major exercise in developing future strategy, led by Paul Buckley (now Vice Chairman) and Nigel Birch (Country Representatives Coordinator). Taking us forward to 2020, it sets challenging targets for membership recruitment, the Conservation Fund, the number and stature of projects funded, the further enhancement of the reputation of ABC as a recognised and respected source of knowledge about African birds, and maintenance of the high standards of governance of our charitable status and general administration.

Your support, advice and ideas will remain vital for the successful evolution of our Club, and I thank you in advance for them. With your Council, I shall work hard to earn that support.

Richard Charles

ABC Trustee changes

The 2015 AGM, as detailed in the last Club News (*Bull. ABC* 22: 2), witnessed several arrivals and departures as Trustees. Keith Betton stood down after seven years as Chairman, Stephen Pringle, ABC's Treasurer since 2013, returned to his academic studies, and Carolyn Hall completed her agreed term of one year, helping with our membership administration. We warmly thank them all for their work.

The following were elected to executive positions: Richard Charles (Chairman), Paul Buckley (Vice Chairman), Chris Spooner (Treasurer) and Phil Hyde (Administrative Secretary). Also elected were Chris Abrams (Webmaster), Phil Hall, Stephen Lowe and Rodah Owako. Each will bring specific knowledge and expertise to Council, and they are warmly welcomed.

ABC Annual Members' Meeting and AGM—11 April 2015

'Science, birding and conservation' is how the British Trust for Ornithology's CEO Andy Clements described the BTO, but could describe the themes running through the talks at the annual meeting held in the Flett Lecture Theatre at London's Natural History Museum: the underpinning science; the importance of birding in extending knowledge; and the need to involve local populations.

Opening the event, outgoing Chairman Keith Betton highlighted the significant amount the Club has raised for conservation projects: 2015 will see UK£250,000 reached. Another milestone is this year's donation of UK£25,000 to help secure the lease of woodland in Kenya's Taita Hills for the survival of the Critically Endangered Taita Apalis *Apalis fuscigularis*.

The first talk was by Sam Kanyamibwa, Executive Director of ARCOS (the Albertine Rift Conservation Society), who described the conservation and development challenges in the Albertine Rift Valley Mountains. ARCOS brings together organisations to raise awareness of the importance of montane habitats and their human populations, which are often neglected. The society is networking 11 countries from Ethiopia in the north to Malaŵi in the south. The Rift is rich in biodiversity, but faces challenges from development. He stressed the need to make knowledge available for policy and decision making, and the importance of linking regional dialogue to local action.

He was followed by Matthew Boyer, who addressed the knowledge question and how birders can help improve our understanding of these regions. Visitors often travel well-worn paths, but the region has many national parks and other areas at least as good as the more visited parts. The problem is their infrastructure is poor and, as a result, they are under-watched. Visiting birders could play a role in helping to raise awareness and improving knowledge of the region.

For Jim Groombridge, from the Durrell Institute of Conservation & Ecology at the UK's University of Kent, the focus was on science and conservation as he described securing the future of Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone corvina*. From a population of 50–60 individuals, the species has grown to *c*.200, but was confined to just one island. Translocation to Denis Island was the chosen route, thus 23 birds were moved and this population has now tripled. Additionally, Common Mynas *Acridotheres tristis* are being eradicated on Denis to help protect the flycatcher and other indigenous taxa.

Helena Batalha from the UK's University of East Anglia, Norwich, described her studies of the Endangered Cape Verde Warbler *Acrocephalus brevipennis*, which is now confined to just three islands. The project is examining the bird's ecology, genetics and conservation. A grant from ABC enabled the team to employ local assistants. This was important for the future, as working with the team not only provided employment but also training in new skills. An unexpected benefit of the project was the way it has linked different stakeholders across the islands.

Samuel Temidayo Osinubu described the African–Eurasian Migratory Landbird Action Plan, part of the Convention on Migratory Species, involving 128 range states across Africa, Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia. He addressed the challenges and the steps been taken to tackle them. These include the Spring Alive project, which involves schoolchildren along the migration routes of five flagship species: Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, Common Swift *Apus apus*, European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*, Eurasian Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* and White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*.

Samuel's presentation had elucidated the gaps in our knowledge of migration. The final talk of the day from Andy Clements addressed just this. Tracking has improved our knowledge of migration, delivering information not only on destinations but also the routes taken. For example, migration connects Niger to 93 other countries. We can also see what habitats birds are using and link this information to population studies. The information gathered has highlighted a number of areas for action including the need to build capacity in Africa; to link tracking and surveys; and to understand intra-African migration.

Most of these presentations can now be seen online, via YouTube, as follows: Matthew Boyer (https://youtu.be/pZUK-Z0PE5U), Jim Groombridge (https://youtu.be/ZDrZGP5Dikc), Helena Batalha (https://youtu.be/-1dN3PsiU1g), Samuel Temidayo Osinubi (https://youtu.be/56Ljbh31ds4) and Andy Clements (https://youtu.be/aR328GlGeXk). Dr Sam Kanyamibwa's talk has not been placed online at the speaker's request.

Contributed by Nigel Birch

Next Annual General Meeting—Saturday 16 April 2016

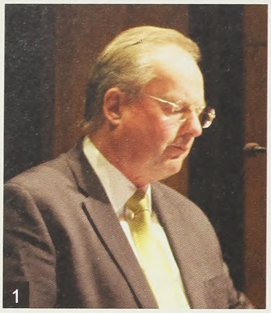
Following a motion from the floor at this year's AGM to move the 2016 AGM away from school holidays, which was carried by a majority, we are delighted to announce that next year's AGM will be held on Saturday 16 April 2016 at the Flett Theatre, Natural History Museum, London. A full programme of talks will be announced early in 2016. We are extremely grateful to Esther Murphy and her team for their help in booking this prestigious venue for us. Full details of the venue can be found at http://www.nhm.ac.uk

British Birdwatching Fair

The Club will attend the British Birdwatching Fair at Egleton, Rutland Water, on 21–23 August 2015. We encourage all attending members to drop in for a chat, meet fellow members, renew their membership, collect Bulletins, or have a refreshing drink. Our developing relationship with New Generation Birders has given us the chance to welcome some of their members to help on the ABC stand, adding some welcome youthful flair and vitality to the existing team. We are keen to see that relationship evolve to the mutual benefit of both organisations.

A new venture on the stand will be a joint fundraiser with WWT, to support conservation of the Critically Endangered Madagascar Pochard *Aythya innotata*. Martin Woodcock, our Vice President and celebrated wildlife artist has produced a specially commissioned painting for the Club; mugs displaying the design will be for sale to support the appeal, and

The ABC AGM, London, April 2015 / L'Assemblée générale annuelle de l'ABC, Londres, avril 2014: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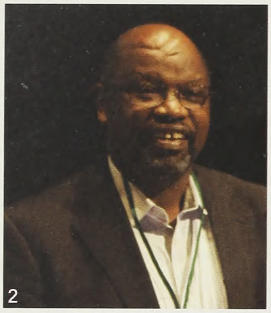
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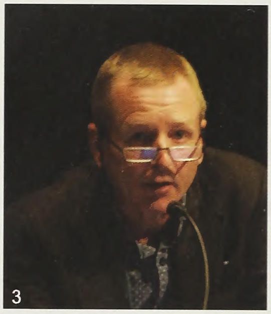
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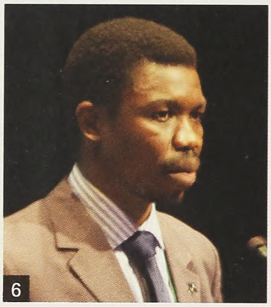
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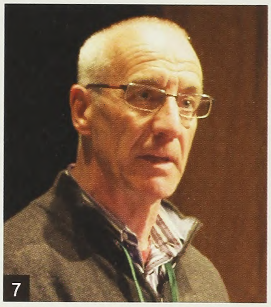
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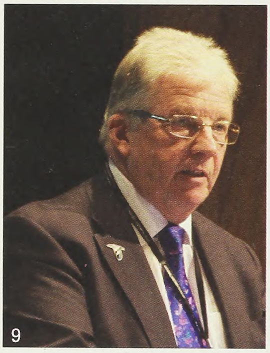
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Captions to facing page

(1) Keith Betton, outgoing ABC Chairman / président sortant de l'ABC;

(2) Dr Sam Kanyamibwa, Executive Director, Albertine Rift Conservation Society;

(3) Matthew Boyer;

(4) Dr Jim Groombridge, University of Kent;

(5) Helena Batalha, University of East Anglia;

(6) Dr Samuel Temidayo Osinubi, Darwin Fellow, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds;

(7) Dr Andy Clements, CEO, British Trust for Ornithology;

(8) Chairmen's handover: Keith Betton and Richard Charles / La relève : l'ancien et le nouveau président de l'ABC;

(9) Richard Charles, incoming ABC Chairman / nouveau président de l'ABC;

(10) Incoming Trustees: Chris Spooner (Treasurer), Paul Buckley (Vice Chairman), Phil Hyde (Secretary) and Richard Charles (Chairman) / Les nouveaux « trustees »: Chris Spooner (trésorier), Paul Buckley (vice-président), Phil Hyde (secrétaire) et Richard Charles (président);

(11) ABC members mingling between the talks / Des membres de l'ABC se rencontrant pendant les pauses (all photographs Nigel Birch)

Martin has graciously agreed that the original painting can be auctioned.

Representing the Club at the Bird Brain of Britain will be Tom Lewis; he is currently working on São Tomé Fiscal *Lanius newtoni*, so his specialist subject of 'The Endemic Birds of São Tomé' should make him a strong contender. We thank Tom and applaud his valour. Please give him your support at the event.

ABC website developments

The redesigned ABC website has been operational for two years and we continue to add new functions and make improvements. Most recently, we have redesigned the home page to provide greater variety and thus stimulate more repeat visits. In particular, we have implemented a Twitter feed and integrated this with the homepage, provided a larger number of news items and a selection of high-quality bird images selected at random from a database.

The ID Challenge has been replaced by ID Quizzes, which are intended as a relaxing diversion for anyone interested in African birds, whether new to the subject or identification experts. Five quizzes, each with ten images, have been set up so far covering either all Africa or East Africa, with varying degrees of difficulty. Further quizzes covering other areas of Africa will follow. There are no prizes, but you can submit your score optionally on a leader board. We would like to thank those photographers who have sent us some superb images for these new projects.

We have implemented changes to make the shopping experience more user-friendly. In particular, membership renewal has been modified to incorporate changes suggested by members. Please let us know if there is anything further you would like to see.

We have had major problems with AFBID and are in the process of producing a rebuilt and improved system. The problems started when our host, POWWEB, deleted the image master file and all back-up copies. Thankfully, we have been able to recover the majority of the images, some 24,000 of more than 2,150 species, which had been loaded over a period of ten years. This is probably one of the most complete collections of photos of African birds covering plumage and geographical variation.

The site has been moved to a new host, CLOOK, which also houses the ABC website and has been given a new address, http://africanbirdclub.org/afbid/. CLOOK uses much more up-to-date software than POWWEB and not all AFBID functions worked correctly. As a result, we carried out software updates to permit images to be browsed and searched, but have 'frozen' the site so that new images cannot be added.

The new AFBID will have a more modern and consistent look, and the capability to accept larger and higher quality images. We would like to thank our photographers for their patience during a difficult period, but hope they will continue to support AFBID when it becomes operational in its new form.

Finally, we are still looking for assistance to maintain the ABC websites. Much of the work is of a non-technical nature and can be done by members with some basic training. Please let us know if you would like to help.

Contributed by John Caddick

Help ABC to reclaim tax with Gift Aid

Gift Aid means that for every UK£1 given to us by a UK taxpayer, whether in the form of membership subscriptions or donations, ABC can claim a further 25% from HM Revenue & Customs. A significant number of our UK members have permitted us to do this, at no cost to themselves other than a signature on a simple form declaring that UK tax has been paid, and authorising ABC to claim it back. On the website, donations can be made at http://africanbirdclub.org/shop/membership and shop/donation http://africanbirdclub.org/shop/donate. Both pages contain information about Gift Aid which has been updated recently. Gift Aid can be added to a membership payment and / or a donation with a single click. A membership leaflet, which includes a Gift Aid declaration, can also be downloaded from either page.

You can also send an e-mail to our Membership Administrator, Alan Williams (membership@africanbirdclub.org), who will send you the appropriate forms. We urge those members who are UK taxpayers and have not yet signed up to complete a Gift Aid declaration.

African Bird Club *Conservation Fund*

New Awards—February 2015

The Conservation Committee reviewed 22 proposals ahead of the February 2015 Council meeting, and recommended three for funding. Following the meeting on 14 February 2015, ABC Council agreed to fund all three projects totalling UK£5,883, for which ABC found UK£4,083 from sponsors. Brief details of the successful proposals appear below.

Survey of Fox's Weaver in Uganda

Fox's Weaver *Ploceus spekeoides* is classified by IUCN as globally Near Threatened. The species is very poorly known and has been recorded from only one area in and around two Important Bird Areas, Lakes Bisina and Opeta, in Lira and Soroti districts, although its distribution possibly extends to the main Lake Kyoga system. Its preferred habitat is papyrus-fringed lakes with nearby wooded grassland, a habitat common throughout eastern Uganda. However, because of its restricted range, the species is assumed to have a moderately small and declining population. The last reliable sighting, of seven birds including two males, was made in January 2010. Roger Keen and colleagues at *Nature*Uganda received a Conservation Award of UK£2,000 to conduct a systematic survey for the species in its known and potential breeding areas. The award was entirely funded by three of ABC's generous sponsors: Julian Francis donated UK£1,000, while Paul Bristow and Paul Lascelles contributed UK£500 each.

Environmental education at Lake Elementaita, Kenya

Lake Elementaita Conservation and Awareness Group (LEACG) is a community-based conservation group formed to address the unsustainable use and degradation of the lake, through tree planting, bird monitoring and participation in the bi-annual waterfowl census in the Rift Valley lakes. Charles Mwangi Gitau of *Nature*Kenya received a Conservation Award of UK£1,883, kindly sponsored by Tasso Leventis, to work with the *Nature*Kenya Youth Committee and LEACG to conduct an environmental education programme in six secondary schools and ten primary schools around the lake and its catchment. Students will be taught the importance of environmental conservation to promote the wise use and protection of Lake Elementaita, and educated about the threatened avifauna of the area through screening of wildlife documentaries and guided nature walks. Environmental clubs will also be set up to encourage birdwatching.

Study of beak and feather disease virus in Echo Parakeet

Echo Parakeet / Perruche de Maurice *Psittacula eques* (Jacques de Spéville)

Deborah Fogell of the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE), University of Kent, received a Conservation Award of UK£2,000 to examine changes in the viral load of beak and feather disease virus (BFDV) in an *in situ* captive population of the Endangered Echo Parakeet *Psittacula eques*. Deborah is already involved in the molecular screening of the wild free-living population of *c*.600 birds, but interpretation of the cumulative 16 years of data is limited because it is not yet known for how long individual parakeet hosts are infected (i.e. duration of the 'infection cycle'). The project will use nine captive parakeets that will be monitored from initial infection to the presentation of physiological symptoms, and will be blood- and feather-sampled repeatedly for a nine-month period. Temporal assessment of viral load in repeat-sampled captive birds is expected to provide crucial data on the frequency and amplitude of viral infection (and variation amongst individuals). This information will improve the screening protocols for wild birds selected as candidates for reintroduction elsewhere on Mauritius, and enhance interpretation of the 16-year infection prevalence dataset. Both will help promote the species' long-term recovery. Richard Charles kindly provided UK£200 funding towards this project.

New Awards—June 2015

ABC's Conservation Committee recommended funding six of the 15 proposals received ahead of the ABC Council meeting on 6 June 2015. Council agreed to fund all six projects, five Conservation Awards and one Expedition Award, a total expense of UK£12,980 of which UK£7,480 was raised from sponsors. Brief details of the successful proposals are given below.

Vulture conservation in north-west Zimbabwe

Roger Parry of the Victoria Falls Wildlife Trust received UK£2,000 for this study, for which sponsors Paul Bristow generously provided £500 and Richard Charles and Chris Spooner kindly contributed UK£250 each. A large number of vultures of different species have been lost to poisoning in Zimbabwe in recent years. In 2013 alone, more than 300 elephants *Loxodonta africana* were poisoned by poachers, with knock-on effects on populations of avian and mammalian scavengers. Working with the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority and South African NGO VulPro, Roger will survey vulture nesting sites in Hwange National Park and nearby areas, to obtain accurate population estimates and assess the conservation measures needed to enhance the protection of all vulture species in the north-west of the country.

Grauer's Swamp Warbler in Uganda

Lydia Tushabe of *Nature*Uganda was awarded UK£2,000 for a study of the status and distribution of the Endangered Grauer's Swamp Warbler *Bradypterus graueri*. Surveys will be conducted at the two known major sites of Muchuya and Mubwindi Swamps in south-west Uganda, other suspected sites, and those identified as potentially suitable from satellite imagery. Approximately 200–300 point counts will be conducted at *c*.30–40 locations. The survey results will be used to: (a) identify new sites for Grauer's Swamp Warbler, which could form the focus of future conservation efforts; (b) determine priority sites hosting high densities of this species; and (c) derive overall regional population estimates that could serve as a baseline for future assessment of population trends. The information will be used to improve the proposed Species Action Plan. Paul Bristow kindly contributed UK£500 towards this project.

Breeding survey of Roseate Terns in Kenya

Little is known concerning the breeding phenology of terns and other seabirds on the Kenyan coast and estimates of breeding populations rely on out-dated information and *ad hoc* anecdotal observations. Martin Mwema of A Rocha Kenya received a Conservation Award of UK£2,000, generously sponsored by Avifauna, to study Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*, a regionally threatened species breeding on Whale Island and Kisite Islands. The project will be carried out over two years and will determine the breeding population of terns on these two islands, their breeding success, whether terns use colonies other than their natal one, and whether terns breed on other islands after abandoning an unfavourable island.

Roseate Terns / Sternes de Dougall *Sterna dougallii* (Werner Suter)

Hinde's Babbler Conservation Month

Gabriel Ngale of the Wildlife Clubs of Kenya received UK£2,000 to raise the conservation profile of the globally Vulnerable Kenyan endemic Hinde's Babbler *Turdoides hindei* in the Mukurweini valleys on the southern slopes of Mt. Kenya. The Mobile Education Unit of the Wildlife Clubs of Kenya will educate 2,000 students from 50 different schools on the status and ecology of Hinde's Babbler and the threats it faces. All schools and surrounding communities will be brought together for a Hinde's Babbler marathon on 18 September 2015. Participants will take part in the primary school, secondary school and adult community member categories. Winners and participating schools will receive awards. The purpose is to create awareness, interaction and share ideas about Hinde's Babbler. A 30-minute documentary will also be filmed, to create a long-term audiovisual tool that will be distributed on DVD and used for conservation education by local school, community and conservation stakeholders. The award was generously sponsored by Avifauna.

Regular ornithological surveys in Niokolo-Koba National Park, Senegal

The Groupement d'Intérêt économique of the guides of Niokolo-Koba National Park (GIE NIOKOLO) was awarded UK£2,000, generously sponsored by Tasso Leventis, to organise a programme of six bi-monthly surveys at pre-defined fixed sites. Scientific supervision and training will be undertaken by Dr Moussa Séga Diop, the Senegalese ornithologist who conducted the June 2014 guide training workshop previously financed by ABC (see *Bull. ABC* 21: 129). The Directorate of National Parks of the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development will provide logistical support, and the project is also supported by the

Association Nature-Communautés-Développement and the French association COMETE International. At the end of the survey period, the data will be analysed to provide information on the absolute and relative populations of different species, on geographical and seasonal population variations, and significant behavioural observations. In addition to its scientific value, this project will have a training component and will also inform sustainable development in the region and community support for bird conservation.

Survey of Nahan's Partridge in Uganda and Democratic Republic of Congo

Dr Eric Sande of the Department of Biological Sciences, Makerere University, Uganda, received an Expedition Award of UK£3,000 to survey the Endangered Nahan's Partridge (until recently known as Nahan's Francolin) *Ptilopachus nahani*. Dr Sande will collaborate with the Organization of Information about Biodiversity and Conservation in Congo Kinshasa (OBICOK) led by Robert Byamana Kizungu. Using playback, Eric will survey Nahan's Partridge in Maiko and Kahuzi-Biéga National Parks and Ituri Forest in eastern DRC, and Semliki National Park in Uganda. He will also use mist-netting to collect blood samples for future genetic studies of the variation between different subpopulations.

Reports received

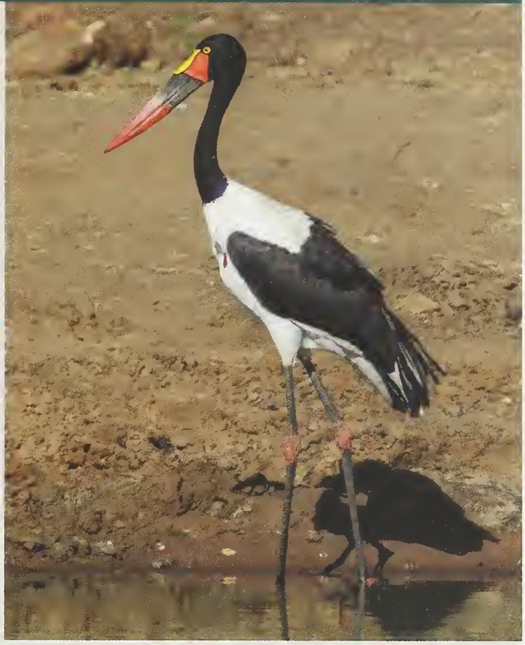
Cape Verde Cream-coloured Courser study

In February 2013, Alex Tavares Gonçalves of the Fundação Maio Biodiversidade (FMB, Maio Biodiversity Foundation) received a Conservation Award of UK£1,650 to study the subspecies of Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor exsul* endemic to the Cape Verde Islands. The subspecies was described on the basis of slight differences in plumage colour, and neither the population size nor its population trend is known. The study took place between April and November 2013 on Maio, the island believed to hold the largest population of Cream-coloured Courser. The recipient, a resident of the island of Maio, had previously benefited from a Conservation Leadership Programme award, and the project was undertaken in collaboration with the University of Bath (UK) and Câmara Municipal do Maio (Cape Verde). In order to identify the preferred habitat of the courser and to estimate its abundance, an island-wide census was conducted using 50 transects, divided into observation points every 150 m. In addition, when nests were located, adults and chicks were caught using walk-in funnel-net traps and colour ringed. A total of 282 individuals was recorded at 99 of the 1,031 observation points. The population is concentrated in the south and south-east of the island, particularly from Salina do Porto Ingles to Morro, the Ponta Preta and Casas Velhas regions, and around Pedro Vaz and Alcatraz. The majority of birds occur in sparsely vegetated lowland desert habitat up to 100 m above sea level. An intensive search conducted in the Salina do Porto Ingles area located seven nests, all initiated between September and October after the start of the rains. Clutch size varied from one to four eggs. Nesting success was very low: five nests were predated prior to the eggs hatching, one of them by Brown-necked Ravens *Corvus ruficollis*. The areas where most coursers were observed are subject to high human pressure, particularly tourist development. Alex hopes to use his observations to estimate the total population size on Maio using GIS modeling, and provide conservation recommendations to the island's authorities.

Cream-coloured Courser / Courvite isabelle *Cursorius cursor* (Augusto Faustino)

Brown-necked Raven / Corbeau brun *Corvus ruficollis* (Georges Olioso)

Black Crowned Crane / Grue couronnée *Balearica pavonina* (Thomas Varto Nielsen)



Saddle-billed Stork / Jabiru d'Afrique *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis* (Jacques de Spéville)

Environmental conservation in the Anyiko wetlands, Kenya

Ajode Zephaniah Migeni of the Tembea Youth Centre for Sustainable Development received a Conservation Award of UK£1,496 in October 2013, generously sponsored by Mark Constantine's Lush Fund, to undertake a community environmental conservation project in the Anyiko wetlands. Located in north-east Ugenya, the Anyiko wetlands is one of several smaller wetland areas in Siaya District, measuring roughly 4 km in length and 50–350 m in width. Based on their proximity to the site and their interests, 15 community members were recruited through public participation and trained on pertinent wetland conservation and alternative income generation issues. A comprehensive biophysical and socio-economic survey was conducted over five days with the help of volunteers and the trained community members.

A series of 40 weekly morning bird walks was conducted to identify the resident birds at the wetland and also acted to empower local communities on their role in conserving the wetland. Thirty-six species were identified, including Black Crowned Crane *Balearica pavonina* (Vulnerable), Southern Ground Hornbill *Bucorvus leadbeateri* (Vulnerable) and the declining Saddle-billed Stork *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis*. A school-based training workshop was undertaken for nature clubs from ten primary schools. Following this, 30 school visits were conducted and >3,340 pupils were taught about (a) environmental education and action (environmental imperatives, wetland conservation and action approaches), and incorporation of these into curriculum activities; and (b) the school self-sufficiency concept, i.e. agricultural education, education for sustainability, eco-schools and school enterprises. The participating schools developed projects such as thematic outdoor excursions to the wetlands, poultry keeping, organic farming and establishing tree nurseries to showcase wetland-friendly activities and enterprises.

Following four stakeholder consultative meetings involving the area chief, conservation bodies (National Environmental Management Authority, Kenya Wildlife Service), papyrus harvest groups, community mobilisers, patrons and Tembea, two conservation zones were created in degraded areas, in which papyrus harvesting was restricted. These zones will be rotated with others every six months so that harvesting becomes sustainable. The project also undertook conservation education and public awareness activities through talks, video shows, theatre and puppetry performances in schools, and strategic social venues such as chiefs' meetings, marketplaces and churches. The approach involved interaction to establish a rapport with the audience, followed by the presentation or performance itself, and finally facilitated discussion on wetland conservation issues. A total of 32 community shows were given to audiences of 300–800 people. Finally, two information boards were erected in the wetland highlighting the rich wildlife that it hosts—including Sitatunga *Tragelaphus spekii*—and the challenges for sustainable wetland use and conservation. The Tembea organisation intends to continue its conservation activities in Anyiko in the long term.

Sitatunga *Tragelaphus spekii* (Werner Suter)

Madagascar Sacred Ibis / Ibis malgache *Threskiornis bernieri* (Dubi Shapiro)

Madagascar Sacred Ibis survey

Sylvaine Volampeno of the Mikajy Natiora Association received UK£1,500 in February 2014 for a population status and distribution survey of the Endangered Madagascar Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis bernieri* in Sahamalaza-Iles Radama National Park (SIRNP). With a world population estimated at fewer than 2,000 individuals, the species is threatened by loss of its mangrove habitat due to tree cutting for charcoal production and construction timber, collection of eggs and nestlings, and hunting of adults for food.

SIRNP is in north-west Madagascar, in the provinces of Majunga and Sofia. The terrestrial areas constitute the main habitat of the Critically Endangered Blue-eyed Black Lemur *Eulemur macaco flavifrons* and the coastal humid forest provides habitat for endemic birds including Madagascar Sacred Ibis and the Critically Endangered Madagascar Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus vociferoides*.

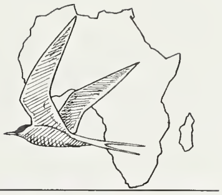
The researchers visited seven sites over a two-month period in June–July 2014, namely Antafiatambalaka, Nosy Telo, Betsimipoaka, Ambariomborona, Ambariondrakaka, Antsambalahy and Kapany. Observations were conducted from the early morning until noon when the birds were still active, and questionnaire surveys of villagers were undertaken in the local language Sakalava with the aid of an interpreter, to elicit information concerning attitudes and threats to the species. An education and outreach activity session was also conducted at the village of Betsimipoaka.

A total of 99 Madagascar Sacred Ibis was recorded at six of the seven sites visited. None was seen at Antsambalahy, and the researchers speculated that this may be because this area is heavily exploited by sea cucumber fishermen, who dredge the surface of the lagoon and disturb the substrate, in which at low tide the ibis forages. The number recorded was higher than in a previous survey of SIRNP in 2006, when only 40 individuals were counted. However, it should be noted that this was over a shorter period of just two weeks. Almost 100 villagers were interviewed. Most (70%) knew of the existence of Madagascar Sacred Ibis and more than half (60%) knew that it was a protected species. Ninety percent claimed that they never hunted or ate the species, and 3% reported that it was taboo to eat the bird. The researchers suspect that this is not a true result, and hunting and consumption of the species may be higher than reported. They recommend that education and outreach activities on Madagascar Sacred Ibis should be continued. The local communities need to take responsibility for conserving and managing natural resources in their vicinity. According to one local informant, Madagascar Sacred Ibis is also present outside SIRNP close to Loza Rivière. Therefore, population surveys both within and outside the park should be conducted regularly in order to evaluate the threats to the species. This Conservation Award was generously sponsored by Mark Constantine's Lush Fund.

Dr Chris Magin, ABC Conservation Officer on behalf of the ABC Conservation Committee

The ABC website (http://www.africanbirdclub.org/conservation-fund-past-projects) shows the complete list of conservation projects and awards made since the inception of the programme. **A remarkable total in excess of UK£200,000 has been donated during this period.** You can view many of the final project reports, including full versions of those summarised above, by clicking on the hyperlinks on the webpage.

Africa Round-up



Compiled by Ron Demey, Guy M. Kirwan and Peter Lack

General

EU initiative to counteract African wildlife crisis

As readers of this Bulletin know well, African wildlife is facing an unprecedented crisis. Currently, *c.*5,000 African flora and fauna species, or 27% of all species assessed on the continent, are listed on the IUCN Red List as being threatened with extinction. The main threats are weak governance, poaching and wildlife trafficking, and the loss of habitats through land conversion and climate change. In addition, wild species are used unsustainably for purposes such as firewood and bushmeat. In response, the European Commission (EC) is developing a Wildlife Conservation Strategy to counteract this crisis, and invited input from stakeholders at a recently organised conference. The meeting gathered over 150 experts from Europe and Africa from both governmental and inter-governmental institutions, as well as NGOs. The EC estimates that at least six billion euros will be needed to manage most of the natural resources in Africa over the next ten years. Crucially, however, these resources should not be considered a 'cost', but as an investment to safeguard the livelihoods of millions of Africans as well as the continent's unique wildlife. The current draft strategy focuses on terrestrial species, but the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development announced that flora and fauna from marine as well as inland waters will be added.

For the occasion, the IUCN Brussels team was reinforced by some senior officials of various Specialist Groups of the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC), as well as the SSC Policy Sub-Committee, and the IUCN Species Programme. In his presentation, Jean-Christophe Vié, Deputy Director of the Species Programme, highlighted the need for continued investment in monitoring, and called for a stronger consultation and involvement of African governments, citizens and civil society (private and NGO sectors). He also emphasised that sustainable funding, and improved governance, were needed to address the crisis, and that efforts should be better coordinated.

Source: IUCN SSC Species e-bulletin February 2015

Combining phylogenetic diversity and threat status

The Zoological Society of London has scored birds, as well as mammals, amphibians and corals, according to how Evolutionarily Distinct and Globally Endangered (EDGE) they are. This global conservation initiative focuses specifically on threatened species that represent a significant amount of unique evolutionary history. The list gives some idea of which species should be prioritised for conservation action. The top 100 EDGE birds include species from 20 of the 29 living bird orders, with 20% belonging to the passerines and ten species to the Accipitridae. Species from the ABC region include Northern Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita* (placed 12th), Madagascar Serpent Eagle *Eutriorchis astur* (19th), Dwarf Olive Ibis *Bostrychia bocagei* (20th), Congo Bay Owl *Phodilus prigoginei* (25th), Secretary-bird *Sagittarius serpentarius* (28th), Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* (30th), St Helena Plover *Charadrius sanctaehelenae* (31st), Nahan's Francolin *Ptilopachus nahani* (35th), Shoebill *Balaeniceps rex* (37th), Bannerman's Turaco *Tauraco bannermani* (52nd), Uluguru Bushshrike *Malaconotus alius* (58th), Udzungwa Forest Partridge *Xenoperdix udzungwensis* (77th), Madagascar Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus vociferoides* (78th), Subdesert Mesite *Monias benschi* (80th) and Pulitzer's Longbill *Macrosphenus pulitzeri* (94th). The complete list can be downloaded from the website, where additional information on the EDGE programme can be found.

Source: www.edgeofexistence.org

Dwarf Olive Ibis / Ibis de Bocage *Bostrychia bocagei* (Nik Borrow)

Strange Lesser Spotted Eagle behaviour

An ongoing study of satellite-tracked Lesser Spotted Eagles *Clanga pomarina* has found that the birds were migrating very strangely in spring 2015. Only two old females followed a rather normal schedule and had crossed the Bosphorus by early April, at which point in time all of the other birds were still in Africa, some as far south as Uganda and southern Sudan, which means that none of them would arrive before May and that they will be too late to breed. Other tracked individuals from Estonia and Slovakia were also very late, and as a result it seemed that the general reproductive success of the species might be very low this year. For more information, see www.Satellite-Telemetry.de.

Source: B.-U. Meyburg in litt. *to AfricanBirding April 2015*

Ostrich commemorates Phil Hockey

Volume 86 (issues 1 and 2 combined) of the South African journal *Ostrich* is dedicated to the career of Phil Hockey who died in January 2013 (see *Bull. ABC* 20: 236–237). Twenty papers are included, by various authors, with more than of half of them co-authored by Phil himself, covering all of the major issues and projects with which Phil was involved. Black Oystercatcher *Haematopus moquini* receives special treatment, as it is the species most associated with him—in the early 1980s, his Ph.D. dealt with its ecology and he also published much subsequently on this species. There are also papers on climate change, movements of waterbirds and on the populations of fynbos birds, and a final note on the discovery of a breeding population of Blue Petrels *Halobaena caerulea* on Gough Island. Abstracts of the papers can be viewed at www.tandfonline.com/toc/tost20/current

Sources: www.tandfonline.com/toc/tost20/current and African Birdlife *3(4), p. 13*

Black Oystercatcher / Huîtrier de Moquin *Haematopus moquini* (Mark Anderson)

North Africa

Atlas Flycatcher update

Since the early 2000s, and the publication of genetic data pertaining to this taxon, Atlas Flycatcher *Ficedula speculigera* has generally been considered a species apart from Pied Flycatcher *F. hypoleuca*. However, even more recently, it has been noted that Iberian Pied Flycatcher *F. h. iberiae* shows very similar morphology to Atlas Flycatcher. Recent claims of possible Atlas Flycatchers in Italy and Malta have prompted a review of the species' identification characters by Andrea Corso *et al.*, as well as a separate review of vocalisations by Magnus Robb. Corso and his co-workers conclude that there are no absolutely safe morphological characters separating *speculigera* and *iberiae*, although the largest white forehead patches and widest and longest primary patches in the former can fall outside the range of *iberiae*, meaning that DNA or sound-recordings will be required to establish the identity of potential vagrants (*wit* calls of *speculigera* differ from those of *hypoleuca* and *iberiae*, and there may be differences in rattle calls too).

Source: Dutch Birding *37, pp. 141–160; 161–163*

Remarkable predation behaviour by Eleonora's Falcon

During a census of the Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonorae* population on the Essaouira archipelago, Morocco, during the 2014 breeding season, a previously undescribed predation behaviour was observed. Eleonora's Falcons were seen to keep captured passerines alive, either by storing them at the bottom of a crevice having removed their wing and tail feathers, or by immobilising them in a deep and narrow hole in the rock, where they were unable to move their wings or stand on their feet. This behaviour may occur before the hatching of the falcons' eggs and was apparently well known to a local fisherman who has visited the archipelago more or less regularly in recent decades.

Source: Alauda *83, pp. 149–150*

Large colony of Glossy Ibis at an urban wetland in Algeria

In 2014, a colony of Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* was discovered at Boussedra wetland, near Annaba, in north-east Algeria. The birds were present from mid March to mid July. Breeding occurred within a mixed heron colony and 124 nests, the majority containing four eggs, were counted. This makes it the largest Glossy Ibis colony in Algeria and North Africa. The species started breeding at Algerian wetlands in the late 1990s after an absence of more than 130 years, and has since colonised most suitable sites, principally in the north-east. Other species breeding at Boussedra wetland include Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* (13 pairs), Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (154 pairs), Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* (211 pairs), Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* (854 pairs) and Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* (62 pairs), as well as Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio porphyrio*, Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*, Common Pochard *A. ferina*, White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* and Marbled Teal *Marmaronetta angustirostris*.

Source: Alauda *83, pp. 143–148*

Namaqua Doves finally proven to breed in Egypt

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis* was proven to breed in the Western

Namaqua Dove / Tourterelle masquée *Oena capensis* (Lionel Sineux)

Palearctic as recently as 1980, in Israel, and since then has expanded north; although the species has been found to be regular on the southern Red Sea coast of Egypt, until now there has been no proof that the species breeds in this country. In 2012 and 2103, during work on mangrove birds in south-east Egypt, Jens Hering and colleagues discovered a number of nests of Namaqua Dove, thereby finally proving it can be added to the Egyptian breeding avifauna.

Source: Dutch Birding *37, pp. 98–102*

And another new breeding species for Egypt

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* is considered a scarce passage migrant through Egypt, as well as a rare visitor to the Nile Delta and Valley in winter, but in summer 2013 and 2014 the species was found breeding at Lake Qarun in El Faiyum west of Cairo. There is just one breeding record in neighbouring Libya (in June 2010) and the Arabian population is estimated at no more than 1,000 pairs.

Source: Dutch Birding *37, pp. 178–180*

Is Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse declining in Egypt?

Rediscovered as recently as 2012, after a period of more than 30 years without sightings, the subspecies *floweri* of Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles exustus*, which is endemic to central Egypt, has been surveyed recently, and seems to be declining, perhaps due to hunting and a scarcity of water (a government farm in the relevant region was closed down at the end of 2012). On the other hand, 750 km away in southern Egypt, close to the Sudanese border, a Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse was photographed in August 2014, although the subspecies concerned could not be determined; in addition to *floweri*, the possibility of nominate *exustus* from elsewhere across northern Africa, or even *erlangeri* from Arabia, must also be considered.

Source: Dutch Birding *37, pp. 95–97*

Atlantic Ocean islands

Egyptian Vulture is declining in the Cape Verdes

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* is a globally Endangered species, and is apparently in strong decline virtually throughout its vast range across Africa and southern Eurasia. In the Cape Verdes, the species was a widespread resident until *c.*25 years ago, but has since undergone a very rapid decline and has now virtually disappeared. Recently, the Vulture Conservation Foundation in partnership with local organisations has endeavoured to establish the species' current status in Cape Verde. In December 2014, two biologists spent ten days doing field work on Santo Antão, one of the islands where the species still survives. They conducted 241 interviews with local people throughout the island, covering subjects like the species' presence, the number of cattle present, the use of pesticides and poison, as well as surveying garbage dumps and slaughterhouses. Twenty-six recent observations (during the last five years) were mapped, the most recent in December 2014 in the Porto Novo area. Some observations involved a pair. The species declined substantially following widespread chemical fumigation on the island in 1988, to try and control a grasshopper plague. Other threats identified were the use of poison to control feral dogs and the reduced availability of food for Egyptian Vultures—fish, traditionally salted and dried on the beaches, resulting in plentiful waste products, is now sent fresh to São Vicente, while the carcasses of dead cattle are now buried. The survey mapped four active garbage dumps, with the largest one in Aguada. There is only one slaughterhouse on Santo Antão (at João de Dias, Ribeira Grande), where the remains of animals are buried or incinerated, but local people still traditionally kill animals throughout the countryside, abandoning some animal parts, which are usually eaten by dogs. The project will now survey the species on other islands, with the aim of developing a conservation plan.

Source: A Cagarra *9, pp. 1–2*

Red-tailed Tropicbird at Tristan da Cunha

A series of records, all in February and March, since 2011, and perhaps involving the same adult Red-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon rubricauda* have

Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse / Ganga à ventre brun *Pterocles exustus* (John Caddick)

Egyptian Vulture / Vautour percnoptère *Neophron percnopterus* (Paul Donald)

Red-tailed Tropicbird / Phaéton à brins rouges *Phaethon rubricauda* (Dubi Shapiro) been made on Inaccessible Island, in the Tristan da Cunha group. The nearest Red-tailed Tropicbird breeding site to Tristan da Cunha is Europa Island in the Mozambique Channel. The bird(s) at Inaccessible were probably not breeding, as only one was ever seen, but in all cases birds were seen over land, which could suggest prospecting behaviour. This is the first record of any tropicbird in the Tristan da Cunha group, the fourth documented Red-tailed Tropicbird for the Atlantic Ocean, but only the second beyond coastal South Africa, and represents considerable vagrancy of >5,000 km from the species' normal range.

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Club *135, pp. 190–192*

West Africa

Sibling Ospreys winter together

Two out of three Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* chicks ringed at a nest in Germany in July 2014 were relocated in November of last year at the same site, Technopole Lagoons, near Dakar, Senegal. Because both adults and juveniles of this species are known to migrate solitarily, it is presumed that young birds use inherited genetic programming when making their first migration to Africa, and the present discovery supports that assumption, although it is also possible that on this occasion the two juveniles travelled together.

Source: Br. Birds *108, pp. 354–355*

Osprey / Balbuzard pêcheur *Pandion haliaetus* (Lionel Sineux)

Pomarine Skua kills Red-billed Quelea at sea

Wim Mullié *et al.* have documented, with photographs, the capturing, drowning and eating of a Red-billed Quelea *Quelea quelea* off Dakar, Senegal, by one of three Pomarine Skuas *Stercorarius pomarinus* that were chasing it. Red-billed Quelea normally does not venture over the sea and this appears to be the first record of predation of the species at sea.

Source: Malimbus *37, pp. 28–30*

First photographic evidence for Great Skua in The Gambia

A Great Skua *Stercorarius skua* was photographed on a beach at the Bijol Islands, Tanji Bird Reserve, The Gambia, on 30 November 2014. This constitutes the first record for the country to be substantiated by a photograph. The paper describing the record mentions three other, previously undocumented, records, from 1996 (no precise date given), 30 January 2003 and 12 January 2015, all on the coast.

Source: Malimbus *37, pp. 16–25*

Turning the tide on nest poaching of Timneh Parrots in Guinea-Bissau

The Bijagós Islands, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve off the coast of Guinea-Bissau, is home to the largest known concentration of nesting Timneh Parrots *Psittacus (erithacus) timneh*, which taxon is now recognised at species level by BirdLife International and is treated as Vulnerable. It is endemic to a handful of West African countries, where the pet trade and habitat loss have taken a heavy toll on populations. As part of an SOS-funded project co-ordinated by the World Parrot Trust, an IUCN member, several community members from nearby villages have been recruited to monitor and protect nests in the hope that their expertise, knowledge and connections within the local community will help turn the tide on parrot poaching. Each year nests are being closely monitored, with regular visits by team members and time-lapse cameras trained on nest entrances. In 2014, when the monitoring team encountered a nest with tell-tale machete marks around the cavity, it soon became apparent that the chick had been poached from virtually underneath the team's noses. In response, meetings were quickly held with community leaders to discuss the incident. Later, under cover of darkness, the chick arrived anonymously at the National Park headquarters in a cardboard box. Once the chick had regained strength, the decision was taken to return it to the nest in the hope that its parents might return. A camera was trained on the nest and the team waited anxiously. It was with much relief that the team watched as the parents returned, cautiously entered the nest and resumed care of the chick. A couple of weeks later it fledged. Dr Rowan Martin, project coordinator with the World Parrot Trust's Africa Conservation Programme concluded: "With a small and dwindling population on the Bijagós Islands, even this seemingly minor boost to breeding success is significant. More importantly, this series of events illustrates the benefits of engaging local communities directly with conservation and how people's attitudes, and most importantly people's actions, can change."

Source: IUCN SSC Species e-bulletin March 2015

Illegal logging in Ghana promotes declines in understorey birds

Nicola Arcilla and co-workers investigated how historical legal logging and recent illegal logging have affected forest bird communities in Ghana. Between 1995 and 2010, officially reported legal logging intensities increased up to *c.*600%, while illegal logging, which now accounts for 80% of timber extraction in Ghana, has driven logging intensities to *c.*6 times greater than the maximum sustainable rate. The researchers collected data in 2008–10 and used a comparable dataset collected in 1993–95 to assess the impacts of recent logging on understorey avian communities in large forest fragments (100–524 km^2) in the south-west of the country. Understorey bird species abundance declined by >50% during this period, while species richness also showed a decline. Whereas analysis based on data collected in 1993–95 estimated a partial post-logging recovery of the understorey bird community at that time, data from 2008–10 showed no indication of recovery, presumably due to ongoing illegal logging. Forest generalist species and sallying insectivores declined significantly in logged versus unlogged forests. These severe declines indicate the rapidly deteriorating conservation status of a biodiversity hotspot and could signal collapsing ecosystem processes. Immediate conservation actions are urgently required to protect surviving forest fragments from further degradation and avian declines.

Source: Biol. Conserv. *188, doi:10.1016/j.biocon.2015.02.010*

Amendments to the Nigerian list

Bob Dowsett has recently reviewed the distribution of birds in Nigeria that were not treated in detail in the most recent national avifauna (Elgood *et al.* 1994), in the process providing comments on more than 100 species. He has clarified certain range limits, and has recommended the addition to the Nigerian list of four species, i.e. African Piculet *Verreauxia africana*, White-tailed Lark *Mirafra albicauda*, Western Black-headed Batis *Batis erlangeri* and Velvet-mantled Drongo *Dicrurus modestus*, as well as the deletion (in the absence of satisfactory documentation) of six others, namely Olive Ibis *Bostrychia olivacea*, Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens*, Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi*, Little Grey Flycatcher *Muscicapa epulata*, Ussher's Flycatcher *M. ussheri* and Rufous-winged Illadopsis *Illadopsis rufescens*.

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Club *135, pp. 154–173*

São Tomé pigeons

There are four species of pigeons resident on São Tomé and a detailed survey has been made by Mariana Carvalho *et al.* Lemon Dove *Columba simplex* is the commonest and is quite widespread; São Tomé Green Pigeon *Treron sanctithomae* and São Tomé Olive (=Maroon) Pigeon *Columba thomensis* are much more restricted in range and largely confined to old-growth forests; and São Tomé Bronze-naped Pigeon *C. malherbii* is relatively abundant and widespread, favouring human-altered habitats, e.g. shade forest and non-forested areas. All but Lemon Dove are hunted. The distribution and abundance of the three hunted species is strongly linked to fruit availability and Green and Olive Pigeons are certainly affected by hunting pressure. It is clear that old-growth and secondary forest are core habitats for all four species, so need to be protected, while the control of hunting is also essential to conserve them.

Source: Bird Conserv. Intern. *25, pp. 71–86*

East Africa

Inattentive Crab-plovers

In a study in Eritrea by Giuseppe De Marchi, breeding Crab-plovers *Dromas ardeola* were found foraging up to 26 km from their nests, spending up to 45 hours off-duty at a time. Even the on-duty adults had very regular short breaks and left the nest for 1–7 hours at a time while foraging. Observations of resting birds suggested that they could have been incubating almost continuously, but actually only did so for 55% of the time—most absences were due to resting and thermo-regulating, and not foraging trips. The eggs were on average 1.7°C above burrow temperature. The low attention was evidently due to the favourable thermal conditions in the nesting burrows and a hot tropical breeding season, which permitted the use of distant foraging areas.

Source: Ibis *157, pp. 31–43*

Still no sign of Liben Lark in north-west Somalia

The Critically Endangered Archer's (now Liben) Lark *Heteromirafra archeri* was formerly considered to be endemic to north-western Somalia and known only from the Tog Wajaale Plain, where 18 specimens were collected in 1918–22. Fifteen visits between 1970 and 2008 failed to relocate the species there, although populations are now known from adjacent Ethiopia. Michael Mills and colleagues conducted three days of intensive surveys on the plain in May 2010. Despite the three other lark species present being in full display, and *H. archeri* having been recorded to breed in early June, no Liben Larks were found. The plain has taller and denser grass than either of

Juvenile Crab-plover / Drome ardéole *Dromas ardeola* (Jacques de Spéville)

Liben Lark / Alouette d'Archer *Heteromirafra archeri* (Paul Donald)

the other known localities for Liben Lark (the Liben and Jijiga Plains), making Tog Wajaale Plain seem superficially more suitable for the species, which prefers areas of taller grass elsewhere. However, previous large-scale agricultural activities may have altered the composition of grass species and precipitated an invasion of exotic weeds, notably *Parthenium hysterophorus*. Importantly, the plain has a greater density of bushes than either the Liben or Jijiga Plains, possibly making ground-nesting birds more susceptible to predation by perch hunters.
Source: Ostrich *DOI:10.2989/00306525.2015.1049670*

Ethiopian shade coffee rated most bird-friendly in world

Coffee is the most important tropical commodity and is grown in high-priority areas for biological conservation. There is abundant literature on the conservation value of coffee farms internationally, but there has been little research on this topic in Africa. Evan Buechley *et al.* sampled bird communities in shade-coffee farms and moist evergreen Afromontane forest in Ethiopia utilising standard mist-netting procedures at seven sites over three years to evaluate bird species richness, diversity and community structure. Although species diversity did not differ between shade coffee and forest, shade-coffee farms supported more than double the species richness of forest sites and all but one of the nine Palearctic migratory species recorded were captured only in shade coffee. There was a greater relative abundance of forest specialists and understorey insectivores in forest, demonstrating that little-disturbed forest is critical for sustaining these at-risk groups of birds. Nonetheless, all species recorded in primary forest control sites were also recorded in shade coffee, indicating that Ethiopian shade coffee is perhaps the most 'bird-friendly' coffee in the world. This is an important finding for efforts to conserve forest birds in Africa, and for shade-coffee farmers that may benefit from avian pest regulation and biodiversity friendly coffee certifications.
Source: Biol. Conserv. *188, http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2015.01.011*

Stripe-breasted Tits are not like their northern counterparts

A 15-year study, primarily using nestboxes, of Stripe-breasted Tit *Parus fasciiventer* in Bwindi-Impenetrable Forest, in south-west Uganda, led by Phil Shaw, has revealed many differences in life history traits compared to temperate titmice species, not only clutch size differences. Just 1.6 fledglings were produced per clutch which, with an average of 1.7 clutches per year, produced only 3.1 fledglings per female per year, which is less than half that for Great Tit *P. major*, although double that of single-brooded southern African *Parus* species. There was a similar level of attention at incubation, but provisioning of young was only 10–18% of their northern counterparts, leading to the young spending 20% longer in the nest. Offspring were last recorded receiving parental care at 81 days (four times the maximum recorded for Great Tits) and remained with their parents for up to three years. Helpers were recorded at 61% of nests.
Source: J. Ornithol. *156: 209–221*

Good news for Clarke's Weaver

Julio Mwambire and Japhet Garama of Dakatcha Woodland Conservation Group have found the second confirmed breeding site for Clarke's Weaver *Ploceus golandi*, a globally threatened species treated as Endangered by BirdLife International and whose population numbers perhaps just 2,000–4,000 individuals. Like the first breeding site, it is in Dakatcha Woodland Important Bird Area north-west of Malindi, in coastal Kenya. During monthly bird monitoring organised by *Nature*Kenya, they recorded large flocks of Clarke's Weavers at Munyenzeni wetland in late April, then on 9 May 2015, Mwambire and Garama found the species nest building at a pool of the seasonal Gandi River. In late May, an estimated 80 weaver nests were found at the same site.
Source: F. Ng'weno in litt. *to AfricanBirding June 2015*

Kenyan bird reports to resume

After two decades of absence, the editors of *Scopus*, Darcy Ogada and David Pearson, are aiming to re-establish Bird Reports for Kenya along the lines of those that formerly appeared regularly in the same journal. *Scopus* is the journal of the Bird Committee of the East Africa Natural History Society, and has been published since 1977, including original material on all aspects of ornithology in the East African region. For the Bird Reports, they are looking to capture interesting bird records in one or more of the following categories: (1) species scarce in Kenya (generally those with fewer than *c.*20 records, mostly migrants); (2) occurrences outside the usual Kenyan range (residents and migrants); (3) records of unusual numbers; (4) unusual dates for migrants; and (5) breeding records of interest, e.g. numbers, new sites, species with few previous records etc. If you have any such records for Kenya, please send them to scopus@naturekenya.org. For scarce species and major range extensions, observers will be asked to provide supporting evidence in the form of a photograph, drawing, or detailed written description. Depending on the volume of records received, the editors will aim to publish a Bird Report once per year, in the December issue.
Source: Darcy Ogada & David Pearson in litt. *May 2015*

Indian Ocean islands

Status of Madagascar Pochard

Madagascar Pochard *Aythya innotata* was thought to be extinct until 2006, when a small population of *c.*25 individuals was found at two small volcanic lakes in the far north of the island. Several studies since then, reported by Andrew Bamford *et al.*, have found that nesting success (75%) and hatching success (90%) are similar to other *Aythya* species, but fledging is very low (only *c.*4%). Duckling mortality occurs mainly between about 14 and 21 days old, with the cause probably being starvation. Adults are principally insectivorous and forage mainly in the shallowest water. However, shallow water is only a very small part of the two lakes in which the species occurs and these lakes are therefore thought to represent very poor breeding habitat.

Source: Bird Conserv. Intern. *25, pp. 97–110*

Unexplained iris variation in Common Mynas

An examination of Common Mynas *Acridotheres tristis*, trapped during eradication attempts on Denis and North Islands, Seychelles, revealed a wide variety of background colours and patterns of silvery white spots in the irides. Explanations were sought via comparison of iris colour and pattern with the birds' age, sex, body condition, primary moult score and gonad size, and a sample of live birds was kept in captivity to examine temporal changes in iris colour and pattern. Juveniles initially had grey irises without stars, but through gradual mottling stars developed and other colours, especially brown, developed as bands within the iris. These changes took place within 3–7 weeks of capture; no major changes were observed in the irises of a small sample of adults over 17 weeks in captivity. No sex differences in colour or pattern were detected, but seasonal differences were apparent, particularly in that multiple bands of stars were more common in the breeding season, and grey irises were more prevalent in the non-breeding season. There was no association between iris colour / pattern and body condition index or primary moult score, but only in females was there a suggestion of a relationship between gonad size and two of the colour/star categories. The authors of the study, Chris Feare and others, conclude that the functional significance of iris variation in Common Mynas is uncertain and requires further study.

Common Myna / Martin triste
Acridotheres tristis (Jacques de Spéville)

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Club *135, pp. 61–68*

'Megadiverse' frog communities of Madagascar are at risk

The amphibian fungus known as *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* (Bd), which has caused the precipitous decline of frog populations in Central America, Australia, the western USA, Europe and East Africa, has now been detected in Madagascar, according to a new paper in the journal *Scientific Reports.* The paper documents the detection of Bd since 2010 in wild Malagasy amphibians and has spurred conservationists to action in a country that is home to *c.*7% of the world's amphibian species.

"We know how bad this could be, but this time we can still make a difference by preventing the kinds of mass die-offs we've seen in other countries," said Reid Harris, co-author of the paper and director of international disease mitigation for the Amphibian Survival Alliance (ASA). "Together the global conservation community is addressing the emergency at its inception, putting into practice what we've learned in the midst of—or even after—extinctions in places like Central America."

An international team of experts screened more than 4,100 amphibians across Madagascar and confirmed the presence of Bd at five locations across the island. The researchers detected the fungus as early as 2010 in Madagascar's remote Makay Massif. Now the paper's authors are working to determine if the fungus they have detected belongs to the same deadly strain that is threatening to cause the loss of more than one-third of the planet's amphibians.

"Ninety-nine percent of the frogs in Madagascar are only found in Madagascar," said Falitiana Rabemananjara, coordinator of the Chytrid Emergency Cell in Madagascar and another co-author of the paper. "That means that if the Bd presence in Madagascar is lethal or becomes lethal to frogs, we could lose a significant portion of the world's amphibian diversity. With an integrative, proactive approach, we are going to do everything we can to prevent that from happening."

In November 2014, the ASA provided financial support for ACSAM2 (A Conservation Strategy for the Amphibians of Madagascar), the second meeting in the last decade to bring together local and international conservationists to address threats to Madagascar's amphibians. This year's meeting focused on developing a plan for this emerging crisis, which includes: the development of an emergency response strategy for the amphibians of Madagascar; the identification of the Bd lineage(s) and characterisation of its virulence; the establishment of a national protocol and permit to collect dead frogs from the field; and building captive assurance populations of priority species to weather the storm. "The loss of Malagasy amphibians is not only important for herpetologists and frog researchers," said Franco Andreone co-chair of the Amphibian Specialist Group-Madagascar of the IUCN, organiser of ACSAM2 and another co-author of the paper.

Source: IUCN SSC Species e-bulletin March 2015

Cape Sparrow / Moineau mélanure *Passer melanurus* (Adam Riley)

Bearded Vulture / Gypaète barbu *Gypaetus barbatus* (Adam Riley)

Southern Africa

Cape Sparrows use weaver nests, albeit very sparingly

Dieter Oschadleus and Amour McCarthy have recently attempted to quantify use by Cape Sparrows *Passer melanurus* of weaver nests, based on a survey of South African nest record cards. The authors searched almost 2,500 nest record cards for the sparrow, as well as more than 10,000 such records for 32 weaver species, locating a total of 32 instances of the sparrow exploiting weaver nests to breed, suggesting a usage rate of <1%. Nests of at least two species of weaver were used, Cape Weaver *Ploceus capensis* and Southern Masked Weaver *P. velatus*, with two records being unascribed to species.

Source: African J. Ecol. *53, pp. 249–252*

Collecting in Malaŵi

The debate over collecting birds, in particular, frequently provokes hotly contested opinions, with advocates of collecting for scientific purposes pointing out the importance of properly vouchered specimens for documenting genotypes and phenotypes, as well as parasites and pathogens, all of which are important for conservation efforts. Collecting of birds in Malaŵi's small protected rainforests occurred almost annually between 2001 and 2011. In a paper in *Bird Conservation International*, Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire and colleagues postulate that the numbers collected pose a threat to some populations in view of their isolation and slow turn-over rates of breeding birds. They give examples of very small populations in Malaŵi and adjacent Mozambique, with several collected species now occurring in no more than one or two reserves in the first-named country. They also express concern as to the example presented to the local communities, reserve wardens and young conservation biologists by collecting birds in reserves primarily established for the protection of wildlife. In response, John Bates and Gary Voelker, who have been working in partnership with the Museums of Malawi, provide a detailed justification and explanation of their research in country, reporting previously unpublished data that do not support the Dowsett-Lemaire *et al.* hypothesis that relevant bird populations at sampling localities must have declined post-collecting. Indeed, they endeavour to counter all of the main points raised by Dowsett-Lemaire and her co-authors, namely that collecting should not be undertaken during the breeding season, population sizes are small in isolated forests, collecting should not be pursued within protected areas, modern scientific collecting in Malaŵi is unnecessary, and the Field Museum should set a better example to Malaŵi's conservationists.

Sources: Bird Conserv. Intern. *doi:10.1017/S0959270914000446, doi: 10.1017/S0959270914000434*

Two southern Africa species have low genetic diversity

Sonya Kruger *et al.* have found that Bearded Vultures *Gypaetus barbatus* in South Africa are genetically quite similar to Ethiopian birds and possess a reduced haplotype diversity compared to Northern Hemisphere populations. This could have implications for any translocations, if these become necessary for a species that occurs in a series of fairly isolated populations. Similarly, Timothy Bray and Phil Hockey found a single genetic cluster across all populations of Black Oystercatcher *Haematopus moquini* in South Africa. Behavioural observations suggest there is strong natal philopatry in this species, but the genetics revealed a significant sign of isolation presumably due to a historically very low population size at some point.

Sources: Ibis *157, pp. 162–166; 171–176*

South Africa's IBA network revised

Sixteen years have passed since the first directory of Important

Bird Areas (IBAs) of the southern African sub-region (Barnes 1998. *The Important Bird Areas of Southern Africa*) was published. It described 122 sites in South Africa and 61 in neighbouring Namibia (21), Botswana (12), Zimbabwe (20), Swaziland (2) and Lesotho (6). Given the change in the situation at many sites, as well as the increase in data for birds and other biodiversity, BirdLife South Africa undertook to update and revise the country's IBA network in 2010. By the end of 2014, the IBA team had assessed all IBAs across the country, resulting in the revision of numerous IBA boundaries. The names of 36 IBAs were changed to reflect socio-political changes or to be more representative, and two IBAs were added to the network (Pondoland Cape Vulture IBA and Devon IBA). Fourteen IBAs were merged into five new IBAs and four IBAs were delisted as they no longer met the required criteria, and the possibility of rehabilitation was deemed to be non-existent. The revised directory will be published in 2015 and will be available in both printed and digital versions (Marnewick, D., Retief, R. Theron, N., Wright, D. & Anderson, T. 2015. *The Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas of South Africa*. Johannesburg: BirdLife South Africa). A webpage has been created for each IBA, with a description and interactive map. Visit www.birdlife.org.za for downloads and additional information.

Source: African Birdlife *3(4), p. 68*

Record numbers of rhinos poached in 2014

A record 1,215 rhinos (*Ceratotherium*) were poached in South Africa in 2014, a 21% increase on the previous year. More than two-thirds were killed in Kruger National Park alone. The last few years have seen extremely worrying new records being set, with poaching fuelled by the belief in countries like China and Vietnam that horns possess medicinal properties. More than 100 rhinos have been moved to more secure locations to protect the animals from criminal gangs who use sophisticated tools such as night-vision goggles and long-range rifles.

Source: www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-30934383

Taxonomic proposals

São Tomé Shorttail is a pipit!

While molecular studies continue to throw up remarkable examples of misclassification among birds, versus taxonomy based on traditional approaches, a recent study by Per Alström *et al.* has uncovered two of the most spectacular examples of bird species being placed in the wrong families. They found that the Rufous-throated White-eye *Madanga ruficollis*, which occurs on Buru, Indonesia, and São Tomé Shorttail *Amaurocichla bocagii*, on the island of São Tomé, in the Gulf of Guinea, are in fact forest-adapted members of the family Motacillidae (pipits and wagtails). Alström *et al.* have demonstrated that *Madanga* has diverged mainly in plumage, perhaps as a result of selection for improved camouflage in its new arboreal niche, while selection pressures for other morphological changes have probably been weak owing to pre-adaptations for the novel niche. In contrast, it seems that the niche change in *Amaurocichla* has led to divergence in both structure and plumage.

Source: Roy. Soc. Open Sci. *2: http://dx.doi.org/10.1098/rsos.140364*

Pale-eyed Rufous-bellied Tits in western Tanzania

Jason Anderson has recently drawn attention to the presence of pale-eyed Rufous-bellied Tits *Melaniparus rufiventris* in western Tanzania, based on both sight records and a specimen in the Berlin museum, from Kakoma, one of three syntypes of the name *M. r. pallidiventris*, for which the previously overlooked eye colour is recorded as yellow-white. Pale eye coloration has never previously been documented in *pallidiventris*. Anderson also reports several minor plumage differences from birds east of the central Tanzanian rift (also considered to be *pallidiventris*) and provides evidence that pale-eyed and dark-eyed adults co-occur within the same population to the west. He concludes that the range of *M. r. masukuensis* probably extends to south-west Tanzania and that differences between eastern and western Tanzanian specimens assigned to *pallidiventris* may warrant separation at subspecific level through resurrection of *M. r. rovumae*, a taxon first collected in eastern Tanzania and since subsumed in *pallidiventris*. However, the author recommends waiting for more data, including phylogenetic comparison of the *rufiventris* complex as a whole, before any taxonomic change is instituted.

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Club *135, pp. 98–107*

A new subspecies of Common Chaffinch in North Africa

Lars Svensson has described a new subspecies of Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* restricted to northern Cyrenaica in north-east Libya, *F. c. harterti*. The principal differences from the other North African subspecies, *F. c. africana* and *F. c. spodiogenys*, are that males invariably possess a prominent white patch on the central nape, a hint of a white post-ocular supercilium, a more yellowish tinge both above and below, stronger yellow fringes to the tertials and wing-coverts, and a less clean blue-grey head. Reasons for not recognising the subspecies *F. c. koenigi* are reconfirmed. There is some variation in size and in saturation of male plumage within the range of *africana*, making separation of *koenigi* untenable.

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Club *135, pp. 69–76*

Notes on the behaviour, plumage and distribution of the White-tailed Swallow *Hirundo megaensis*

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Notes sur le comportement, le plumage et la distribution de l'Hirondelle à queue blanche *Hirundo megaensis*. L'Hirondelle à queue blanche *Hirundo megaensis* est une espèce menacée et peu connue endémique à l'Éthiopie du sud, où elle est confinée à une petite zone de savane à *Acacia*. En dépit de la pénurie de données antérieures sur la nidification, nous avons trouvé 67 nids en 2010–14, généralement dans des cases villageoises habitées, et nous rapportons les premiers cas confirmés de nidification dans des termitières (deux mentions certaines). Le nid est une petite coupe maçonnée de boue et garnie d'herbes et de poils d'animaux, fixée à une poutrelle circulaire supportant le toit. Il ressemble à celui de son espèce sœur, l'Hirondelle à gorge perlée *H. dimidiata* de l'Afrique australe, malgré le fait que l'Hirondelle à queue blanche a des pontes plus grandes (3–4 œufs blancs) et niche moins souvent, produisant une nichée dans chacune de ses deux saisons de nidification, qui sont actionnées par les pluies (avril–juin et octobre–novembre). Le même nid est apparemment utilisé en ces deux saisons, probablement par le même couple. L'incubation dure 16–17 jours, certaines nichées comportant des jeunes nettement plus petits, ce qui suggère une éclosion asynchrone. L'examen de jeunes en main et de spécimens de musée a confirmé que les juvéniles peuvent être identifiés par la queue plus courte, la tête et souvent aussi les ailes plus brunes, et le blanc de la queue plus réduit. L'espèce est d'habitude observée seule ou en couple, mais des groupes comprenant jusqu'à 50 individus, parfois mélangés à d'autres hirondelles, peuvent être rencontrés. L'aire de nidification est presque identique à celle du Corbin de Stresemann *Zavattariornis stresemanni*, mais des observations régulières depuis 2005 sur la plaine de Liben, à 120 km à l'est de la zone principale, semblent indiquer que l'Hirondelle à queue blanche y est un visiteur fréquent.

Summary. White-tailed Swallow *Hirundo megaensis* is a threatened and poorly known bird endemic to southern Ethiopia, where it is restricted to a small area of *Acacia* savanna. Despite the paucity of previous nest records, we found 67 nests in the years 2010–14, commonly in occupied village huts, and report the first confirmation of nesting (two certain records) in termite mounds. Its nests are small mud cups lined with grass and animal hair, fixed to roof joists and similar to those of its sister species, Pearl-breasted Swallow *H. dimidiata* of southern Africa, although it appears to lay larger clutches (3–4 pure white eggs) and breed less frequently, producing one brood in each of its two rain-driven breeding seasons (April–June and October–November). The same nests are reportedly used in both seasons, presumably by the same pairs. Incubation lasts 16–17 days, with some broods having clearly smaller chicks and hence presumably asynchronous hatching. Study of nestlings in the hand and museum specimens confirmed that juveniles can be identified by their shorter tails, browner heads and frequently also wings, and reduced white in the tail. Although the species is typically seen singly or in pairs, flocks of up to 50, sometimes mixed with other hirundines, do occur. The breeding range appears to be almost identical to that of Stresemann's (Ethiopian) Bush Crow *Zavattariornis stresemanni* but regular sightings of White-tailed Swallows since 2005 at the Liben Plain, 120 km east of the core area, suggest that the species is a frequent visitor there.

White-tailed Swallow *Hirundo megaensis* is a globally threatened (Vulnerable) species restricted to *c*.5,500 km^2 of *Acacia–Commiphora* savanna woodland around the towns of Yabello and Mega in southern Ethiopia (Benson 1942, Collar & Stuart 1985), with a few recent sightings elsewhere, notably the Liben Plain, 120 km to the east (Gabremichael *et al.* 2009, BirdLife International 2015a). This tiny range largely overlaps with that of Stresemann's (Ethiopian) Bush Crow *Zavattariornis stresemanni* (Endangered), which appears to be limited largely by climate (Donald *et al.* 2012, BirdLife International 2015b). White-tailed Swallow is extremely closely related to Pearl-breasted Swallow *H. dimidiata* of southern Africa, differing in mtDNA by just 0.7%, less than the genetic distance between many subspecies of Barn Swallow *H. rustica* (Dor *et al.* 2010).

White-tailed Swallow was first described to science as recently as 1942, and it was not until

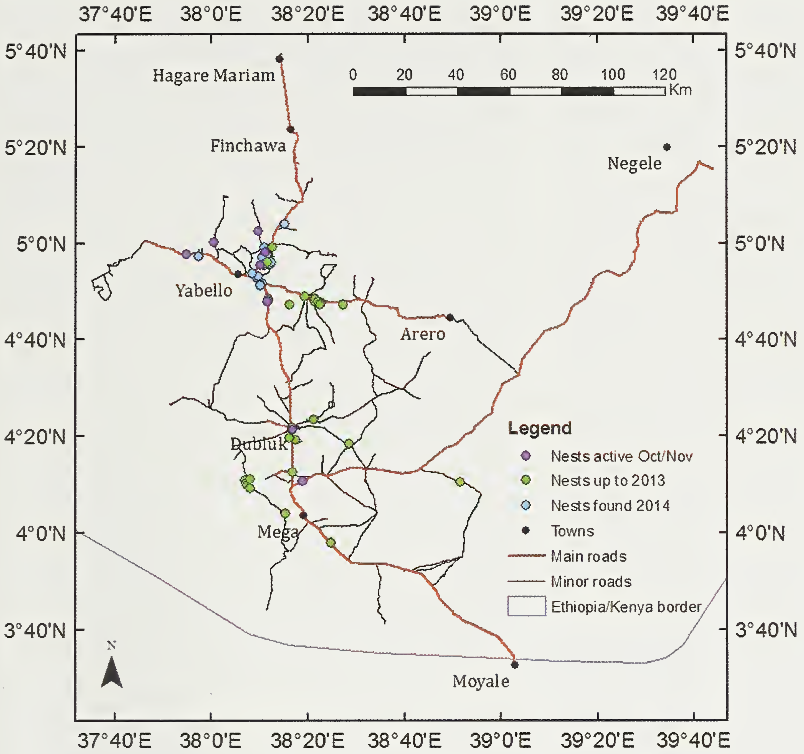


Figure 1. Study region, showing all White-tailed Swallow *Hirundo megaensis* nest records to date. Nests found active in April and May 2014, and in October and November of any year, are highlighted.

Zone d'étude, avec toutes les données de nidification de l'Hirondelle à queue blanche *Hirundo megaensis* recensées jusqu'à présent. Les nids occupés en avril et mai 2014, et en octobre et novembre de n'importe quelle année, sont indiqués.

1996 that its nest was documented (Holtam 1998). Despite, or perhaps because of, its highly restricted distribution, White-tailed Swallow has remained under-studied, with scant information on its abundance, behaviour and habitat preferences (Ash & Gullick 1989, Syvertsen & Dellelegn 1991, Mellanby *et al.* 2008). Over the past ten years we have made numerous visits to the Yabello–Mega region to develop project work on Stresemann's Bush Crow, and in 2010–14 we found a total of 67 nests of White-tailed Swallow (two in 2010, 11 in 2011, nine in 2012, 11 in 2013 and 34 in 2014: Fig. 1). Additionally, we have examined nine specimens at the Natural History Museum, Tring, UK (NHMUK) and one at the Zoological Research Museum Alexander Koenig, Bonn, Germany (ZFMK). Here we document these findings.

Nest locations

Given that Pearl-breasted Swallow breeds in mud huts, wells, animal burrows, buildings, bridges and rock faces (Maclean 1993, Harrison *et al.* 1997), it might have been expected that White-tailed Swallows would utilise a similar breadth of locations. Benson (1946) had suspected breeding occurred in termite mounds, but Holtam (1998) found two nests with chicks in village huts in May, and a third in a deep well in September. In October 2000 a further four nests were reported in culverts under the main (Addis Ababa–Nairobi) road that bisects the species' range, and in October 2001 two pairs were seen frequenting a termite mound, one bird carrying food (Ash & Atkins 2010). However, the observer has clarified that the birds observed at the culvert may not have been the builders of the nests seen, and that the birds at the termite mound may simply have been feeding there (N. Borrow *in litt.* 2008).

Village huts

Traditional Borana huts probably provide the most important nesting sites for White-tailed Swallow. All but two of our 67 recent nests were in traditional Borana domestic huts or their associated store huts, with one nest in 2010 in a termite mound converted into a bread oven (see below) and one in 2013 against wooden beams in an isolated concrete building next to a water storage tank (Fig. 2).

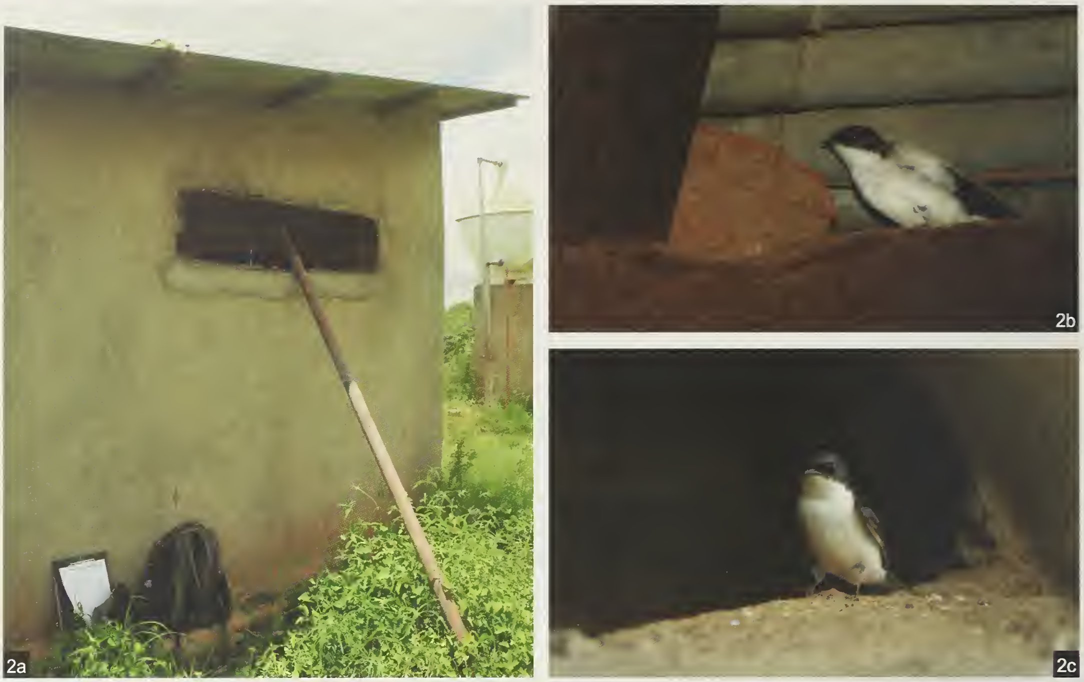


Figure 2. White-tailed Swallow *Hirundo megaensis* nest found in April 2013 in a concrete building. This is the only nest record from a non-traditional building, and it is noticeable that the nest is attached to the wooden beams (perhaps more akin to the sides of a termite mound or the thatching of a traditional hut) rather than to the horizontal corrugated iron roof (Andrew Bladon)

Nid d'Hirondelle à queue blanche *Hirundo megaensis* trouvé en avril 2013 dans un bâtiment en béton. C'est la seule donnée de nidification dans une construction non traditionnelle. Le nid est attaché aux poutrelles en bois (peut-être plus semblables aux parois d'une termitière ou à la toiture d'une case traditionnelle) et non pas au toit horizontal en tôle ondulée (Andrew Bladon)

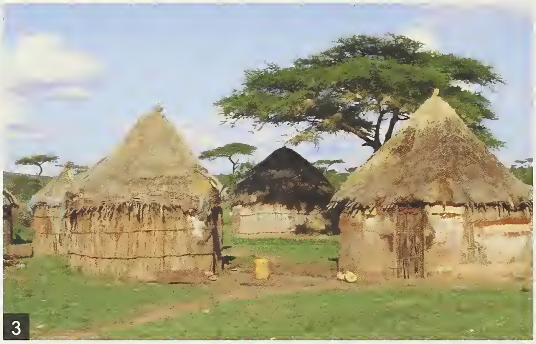


Figure 3. Traditional Borana huts are important nesting sites for White-tailed Swallow *Hirundo megaensis*; huts number between five and 100 per village and in the best areas, such as on Dida Yabello plain, there may be one or two White-tailed Swallow nests in each village (Andrew Bladon)

Les cases traditionnelles des Boranas sont des sites de nidification importants pour l'Hirondelle à queue blanche *Hirundo megaensis* ; il y a 5–100 cases par village et dans les meilleures zones, telle que la plaine de Dida Yabello, il peut y avoir un ou deux nids d'Hirondelles à queue blanche dans chaque village (Andrew Bladon)

Borana huts are typically small, circular and constructed with wattle-and-daub style mud walls, a single doorway, and a low-pitched conical thatched roof supported by vertical beams and circular thatched joists (Fig. 3). They are 2–6 m in diameter, and 3–5 m in height; domestic huts are generally larger than store huts. Doors (not always present) vary from a loose assembly of large sticks that roughly fill the opening to occasional solid structures with a frame. In all but the last case, access holes large enough for the adult swallows remain even when the door is closed. Occupied huts are usually solid and complete, whilst huts used for storing grain or housing animals are built to the same design but often with only partial daubing or thatching and looser doors, permitting easier access but less protection from the weather. Both constructions are numerous within villages, store huts accounting for 20–30% of the total number of buildings.

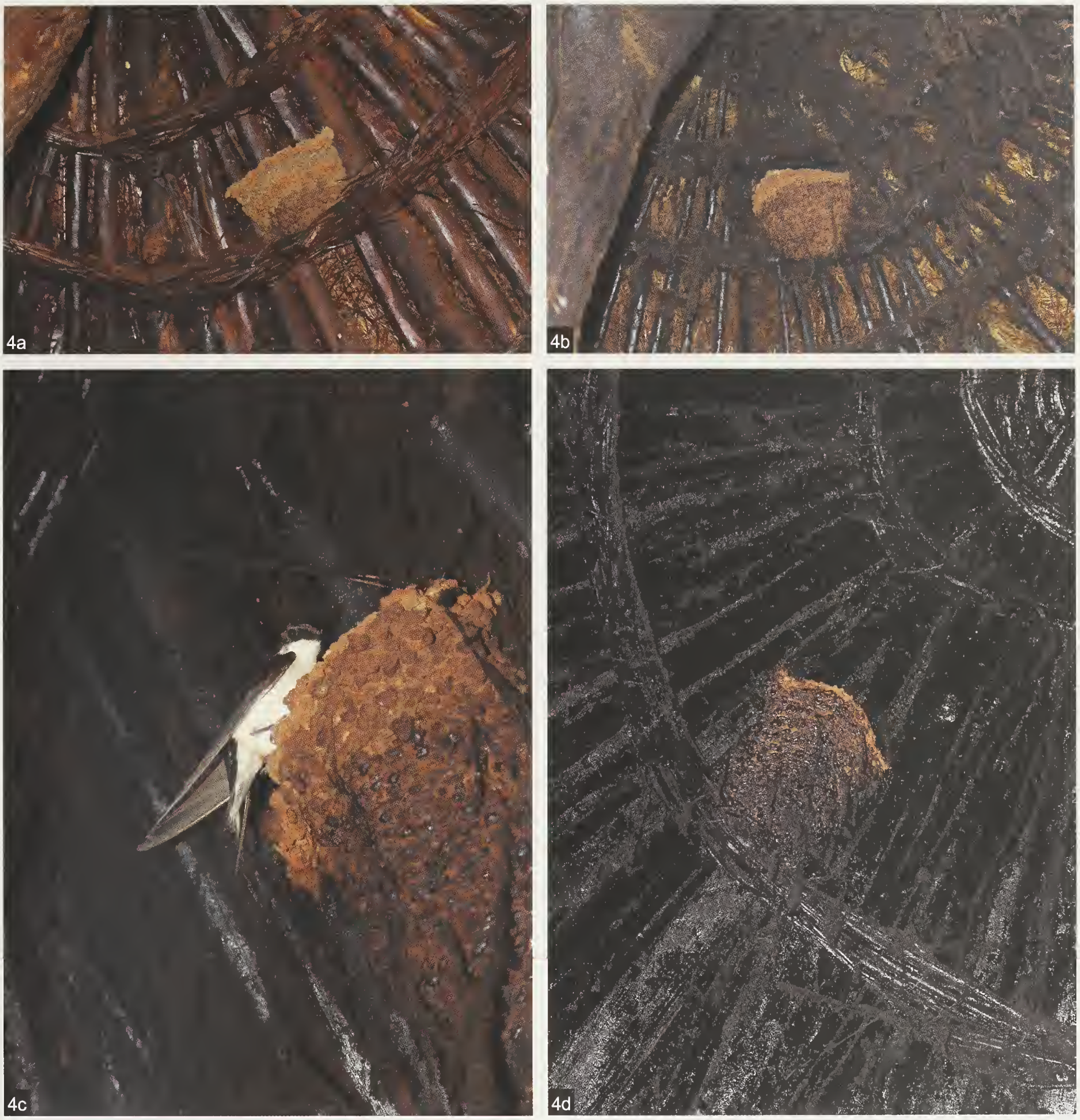


Figure 4. White-tailed Swallow *Hirundo megaensis* nests of different ages: **(a)** new nest in a newer hut with a clean roof; **(b)** old nest with a second layer of paler mud at the top; **(c–d)** older nests (here three and five years old) are deeper in construction, and the lower, older, part is blackened by carbon deposits from the hut's fire. Carbon deposits can also be seen suspended from the ceilings of these huts. This suggests birds re-use nests from year to year, with some new mud being added in later years (Andrew Bladon)

Nids d'Hirondelles à queue blanche *Hirundo megaensis* d'âges différents : **(a)** nouveau nid dans une case relativement neuve avec un toit propre ; **(b)** vieux nid avec une deuxième couche de boue plus pâle ; **(c–d)** les vieux nids (ici de trois et cinq ans) sont plus profonds, et la partie inférieure la plus vieille est noircie par les dépôts de carbone provenant du feu de la case. Des dépôts de carbone sont aussi visibles au plafond de ces cases. Ceci suggère que les hirondelles réutilisent les nids d'année en année et ajoutent chaque année un peu de boue (Andrew Bladon)

White-tailed Swallow nests are cups constructed of mud, typical of the genus *Hirundo*. Depth varies from 60 to 160 mm (n = 28) (Fig. 4), possibly related to the age of the nest (see below). Nests in huts were fixed to the circular joists of the roof, at heights of 2.5–4.5 m (n = 28), normally built within a few joists of the top of the hut. It appears that White-tailed Swallows

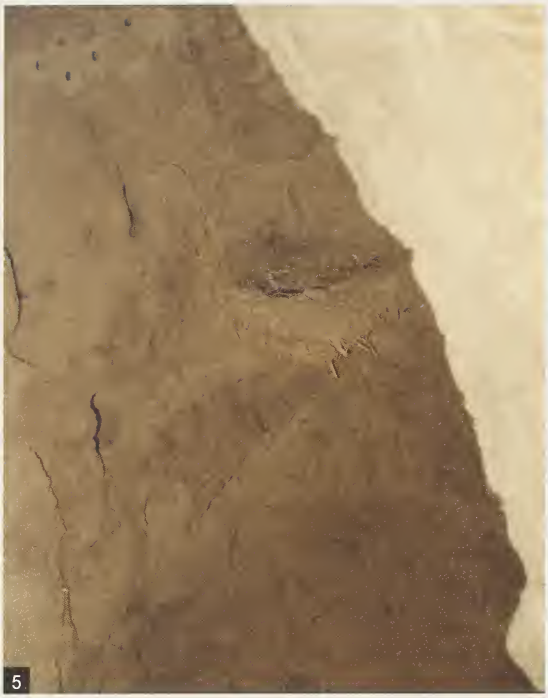
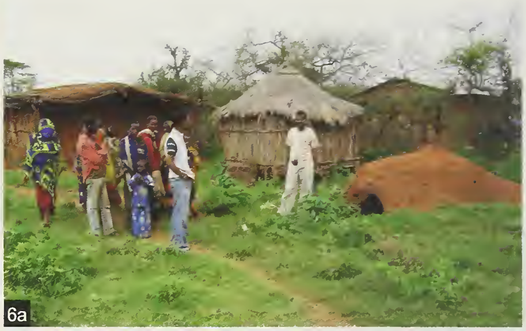


Figure 5. White-tailed Swallow *Hirundo megaensis* nest within a termite mound on Soda Plain, Ethiopia, found by a Sunbird tour party in November 2008 (Les Colley / Sunbird)

Nid d'Hirondelle à queue blanche *Hirundo megaensis* à l'intérieur d'une termitière dans la plaine de Soda, Éthiopie, trouvé lors d'un voyage de Sunbird en novembre 2008 (Les Colley / Sunbird)



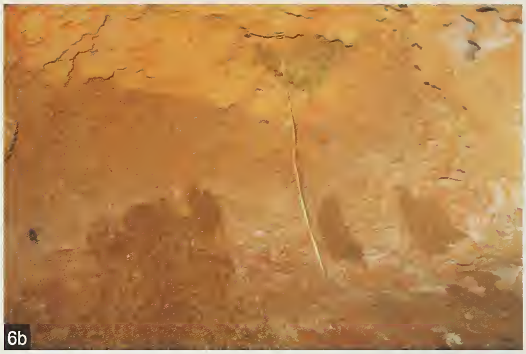


Figure 6. An old termite mound, previously used as a bread oven by villagers, in which a White-tailed Swallow *Hirundo megaensis* nest was found in June 2010 (Nigel Collar)

Vieille termitière, utilisée auparavant comme four à pain par les villageois, dans laquelle un nid d'Hirondelle à queue blanche *Hirundo megaensis* a été trouvé en juin 2010 (Nigel Collar)

prefer to nest in huts occupied by people (31 nests in 2014), with only a few records from store huts (three in 2014). In contrast, of ten Ethiopian Swallow *H. aethiopica* nests found during the same search in 2014, only two were within occupied huts and eight within store huts, a statistically significant difference ($\chi^2_1 = 20.8$, $P < 0.0001$). This is consistent with observations of Ethiopian Swallow nests in previous years (KG, TT).

Within the core range at the right season (see below) one can walk into a village and ask for 'mana raaree' (swallow nests) and be led straight to one, or at least directed to the next village where one can be found. On the edges of the range, however, for example the three villages where nests were found west of Yabello in 2014, people showed little awareness of the birds and frequently only the owners of the hut that actually contained the nest were conscious of the birds' presence. This is intriguing, as the Borana do not distinguish between species of swallow, 'raaree' being their term for all hirundines or bats, but perhaps it is simply because other species nest less frequently in village huts. The same search effort in 2014 yielded only ten nests of Ethiopian Swallow, suggesting a lower density of birds, while Lesser Striped Swallows *Cecropis abyssinica*, which are common across the region, seem to nest only on concrete structures—local clinics, schools or culverts under the road—and in caves (AJB, KG, TT pers. obs.). Indeed, in the same region west of Yabello, we were regularly pointed towards road culverts when asking for 'raaree', only to find *Cecropis* nests with their distinctive funnel entrance (Winkler & Sheldon 1993).

There is considerable variation in local people's responses to swallow nests in their huts. Those who identify them as swallows view the nest as a sign of good luck, while those who mistake them for bats report that they destroy the nests because the droppings can cause blindness. These attitudes can be split even within a village, with one lady informing AJB that she had not destroyed the nest despite what her neighbours said, and was glad when the birds produced chicks.

Termite mounds

It is almost 70 years since Benson (1946) suggested that White-tailed Swallow might nest in termite mounds, but little evidence for this ever accumulated. Birds have been seen frequenting them (Collar & Stuart 1985, Borrow 2001), but we can report only three occasions where nests have been suspected or found in them. On 14 November 2007 a pair of swallows was observed entering a 40-cm-wide west-facing ground-level cavity in a 3-m-tall termite mound south of Dubluk, the birds each time remaining inside for >1 minute; to avoid disturbance no attempt was made to investigate further (B., W. & S. Oosterbaan *in litt.* 2010). On 20 November 2008 a nest was found attached to the side of a large hole at the base of a broken-off termite mound on Soda Plain; it was not possible to establish if the nest was active (S. Rooke *in litt.* 2008; Fig. 5). On 3 June 2010, in a village near Dida Hara, an active nest was found inside an old termite mound previously used as a bread oven by the villagers. The entrance to the mound was *c.*0.75 m wide at the base, 0.9 m in height, and shaped like a truncated triangle. The cavity inside was roughly 1×1×1 m, with a circular base and a domed roof. The nest was fixed to the roof of the dome (Fig. 6).

Nesting in termite mounds, which are presumably ancestral nesting sites for the species, is thus proven, but given the relative difficulty of locating these nests (unlike those in huts, they are not noticed by local people) it is impossible to judge if nesting in huts or termite mounds is more frequent. However, the abundance of huts across the species' range, the lack of occupation of termite mounds searched in 2014 in areas where the birds were nesting in huts, and the apparently low frequency of suitably sized cavities within termite mounds combine to suggest that hut nesting is much commoner.

Total White-tailed Swallow nest records now number 72: 62 in village huts, five in store huts, three in termite mounds, one in a remote water storage building and one in a well. Our nest records are from across the core of the species' range (Fig. 1), but there are still none from the Liben Plain. Visitors who locate further nests, particularly in termite mounds, are encouraged to send us details, including photographs and if possible GPS coordinates; any records away from the core range around Yabello and Mega will also be welcome.

Observations at the nest

In 2014 a detailed study of White-tailed Swallow nesting behaviour was conducted by AJB, JD, GD & MA, and the observations described here relate solely to the 23 nests involved. The 11 other nests found in 2014 were either inactive (five) or inaccessible (six—too high to inspect safely or further entry to hut was refused). In the case of inactive nests, the lining, presence of old eggs, and frequently the visiting or proximity of adults made us confident that all belonged to White-tailed Swallows. Nests were lined with grass and animal hair, and the eggs were pure white, as in Pearl-breasted (Schmidt 1959) and Pied-winged Swallows *Hirundo leucosoma* (Fry *et al.* 1992). This permits easy distinction from Ethiopian Swallow nests, whose eggs are speckled chestnut (Grant & Lewis 1984) (Fig. 7). In only one instance were a few feathers found in a White-tailed Swallow nest, whereas they are observed occasionally in nests of Pearl-breasted Swallow (Maclean 1993) and all ten Ethiopian Swallow nests found in 2014 were lined with chicken feathers. Clutch size was three in nine nests and four in ten (the other four were only seen at chick stage: two with four small chicks, one with two large chicks, and one with one large and one dead chick). Clutch size appears to be larger than in Pearl-breasted Swallow, for which two or three eggs are common but four is unusual (Fry *et al.* 1992, Maclean 1993).

Incubation period was 16–17 days (n = 5), as in Pearl-breasted Swallow (Schmidt 1959). In at least five nests, which were seen within the first two days after hatching, one chick had clearly hatched a day or two after the others, while in a further nine nests (first seen slightly later) the same notably small chick remained the runt throughout development, and often fledged a day

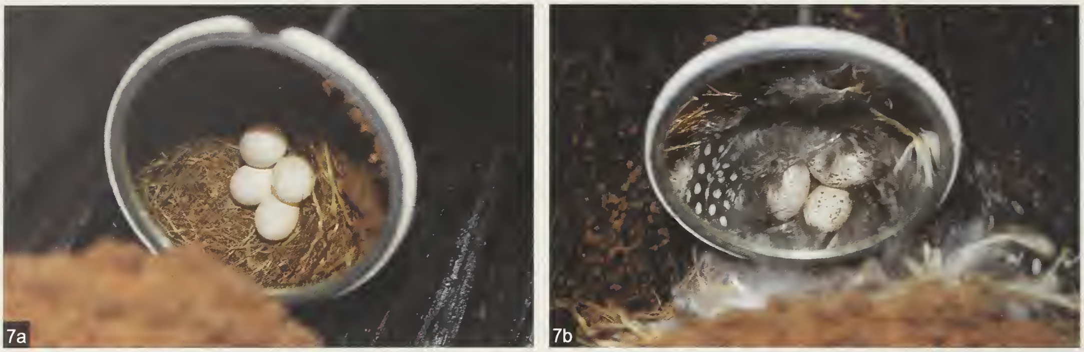


Figure 7. Comparison of nests of **(a)** White-tailed Swallow *Hirundo megaensis* and **(b)** Ethiopian Swallow *H. aethiopica*. White-tailed Swallows lay 3–4 pure white eggs in a simple grass- and hair-lined cup, while Ethiopian Swallows add a thick padding of feathers and lay 1–4 speckled eggs (mode = four) (Andrew Bladon)

Comparaison des nids de **(a)** l'Hirondelle à queue blanche *Hirundo megaensis* et de **(b)** l'Hirondelle d'Éthiopie *H. aethiopica*. L'Hirondelle à queue blanche pond 3–4 œufs blancs dans une simple coupe garnie d'herbes et de poils, tandis que l'Hirondelle d'Éthiopie ajoute une couche épaisse de plumes et pond 1–4 œufs tachetés (le plus souvent quatre) (Andrew Bladon)

or two later, if at all. This matches the asynchrony reported in Pearl-breasted Swallows (Schmidt 1959, Turner 2004). In the remaining nine broods no asynchrony was evident, suggesting that either it does not always occur or some catch-up growth can redress a size difference. This asynchrony and its absence were observed in both three- and four-egg broods, suggesting that it is unconnected to clutch size.

Breeding season

The main breeding season of White-tailed Swallows is April–June (Turner 2004) and the 23 active nests studied were found from early April to late May 2014, following the start of the wet season in March (JD, GD). When re-checked in June, none of these nests was active, suggesting that the birds do not lay a second brood. Several broods were found in early June in previous years (2010, 2011 and 2013), presumably because the wet season started slightly later (in 2013 it began in early April). In contrast, three of the ten Ethiopian Swallow nests were active again in June 2014, all three having been among the earliest Ethiopian Swallow nests to fledge their first brood, although none earlier than the first White-tailed Swallow nest to fledge. In addition, one White-tailed Swallow nest was lined with feathers and contained an Ethiopian Swallow brood. Intriguingly, this nest was in a hut which, although occupied, was in severe disrepair and intermediate in construction between the domestic huts favoured by White-tailed Swallows and the store huts favoured by Ethiopian Swallows.

In addition to the November 2007 and 2008 records (see above), two active White-tailed Swallow nests were found on 17 November 2012 at Derito, two in October 2013 near Dida Tuyura and Dadim, and three in October 2014 at Areri, Elwayaa and Dida Yabello (Fig. 1). The three 2014 nests all had eggs or chicks. These breeding attempts are presumably a response to the shorter wet season at this time of year (EWNHS 2001), and their distribution across different years and much of the range suggests that there is a second breeding season, although whether individual birds breed in both is unknown. However, two of the three October 2014 breeding attempts were in nests also used in May 2014, and the third was in a nest found in May when not active but did have two adult birds visiting, and which the villagers reported had been used during the previous rains. This suggests that the same pairs used the same nests in each of the two breeding seasons.

None of our 23 White-tailed Swallow nests was found to produce a second brood, whilst three of our ten Ethiopian Swallow nests did. It would appear, therefore, that some change in environmental conditions curtailed White-tailed Swallow's breeding window without affecting that of Ethiopian Swallow. This could reflect a difference in food sources. An alternative explanation is that, as temperatures rise from the wet season into the dry season, White-tailed

Swallow reaches the upper limit of its physiological capacity to breed, a possibility supported by the close match of White-tailed Swallow's range to a modelled climate envelope (Bladon *et al.* in prep.).

In contrast to White-tailed Swallow's single brood per breeding season, Pearl-breasted Swallow has two or even three (Schmidt 1959). Lindén (1988) found that in Great Tits *Parus major* the success of a second brood is negatively affected by the size of the first, favouring first brood reduction. The observed larger clutches of White-tailed compared to Pearl-breasted Swallow (Fry *et al.* 1992, Maclean 1993) might therefore be expected if White-tailed Swallow is only able to breed once per season, compared to Pearl-breasted Swallow's twice (Schmidt 1959). McGillivray (1983) noted that in House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* clutch size also increases when the adults' probability of survival until the next breeding attempt (which is a function of time between broods) is reduced. The time between White-tailed Swallow's April and October breeding seasons is greater than that between Pearl-breasted Swallow's first and second broods within a season, so again the larger clutch size in White-tailed Swallow might be expected.

Nest re-use

The same nests appear to be used over several years. A number of villagers in April–May 2014 informed us that the birds had nested in their huts previously. Three were reportedly new nests, two of which we observed in the process of construction, but another nest was two years old, two were three years old, and one was reportedly five years old (Fig. 4). Additionally one nest, active in both April and October 2014, was again active in April 2015 (S. Busuttil pers. comm.). Re-use of old nests occurs in Barn and Pearl-breasted Swallows (Møller 1990, Turner 2004), and evidence of this in White-tailed Swallows is further supported by the fact that active nests become blackened with carbon deposits from the hut fire, often with a noticeably paler, and therefore presumably newer, layer or two of mud at the top of the nest (Fig. 4). Colour variation and presence or absence of blackening of nests suggests that those in huts with fires visibly darken, and this should permit at least crude age estimation.

Nest re-use between seasons is perhaps a strategy to compress the breeding cycle. If the birds are limited to a shortened breeding season following each rains, with only time to produce one brood, then saving 2–4 weeks of nestbuilding (Schmidt 1959, Turner 2004) might significantly increase chances of success. Alternatively, it may permit the birds to breed even if there is a shortage of mud following a poor wet season. The simple grass and hair lining in White-tailed Swallow nests, and the preference for occupied huts with smoking fires, is perhaps a strategy to reduce parasite build-up between years which would otherwise hinder re-use of old nests (Møller 1990). The implication of this is that one or both pair members return to the same nest in subsequent breeding attempts, but the degree of nest-site fidelity in White-tailed Swallows awaits further research.

Behaviour at the nest

White-tailed Swallows appear well habituated to humans. They pay little attention to people entering nest huts, and will even 'squeeze' through a partially covered door to enter a hut full of people. Feeding rates by the pair can reach four or five times per minute, although occasionally the nest is not visited for up to 30 minutes (broods aged 8–14 days; AJB pers. obs.). When resting, adults often perch on the *Acacia* fences constructed by the villagers as cattle corrals, favouring those closest to their nest hut. Juveniles also frequent them post-fledging, while still being fed by their parents (Fig. 8). Several villagers reported that young birds continued to roost in the nest for up to six nights after fledging, although this was clearly not a rule as at least four broods did not return after fledging.

While attending the nest, males occasionally give a burry, hard but quiet *tetch*, apparently in contact. Once, at the nest in the old bread oven in 2010, a brisk, anxious, slightly sparrow-like *tsswis* was repeated rapidly but irregularly by the male when a dog was near the entrance to the cavity; this was evidently an alarm call. These two calls appear to be the first reported for the species.

Sex identification and juvenile plumage

Tail colour

As originally established by Benson (1942), males can be separated from females by the greater extent and brighter white in their tails. The amount of white in the tail is shaped

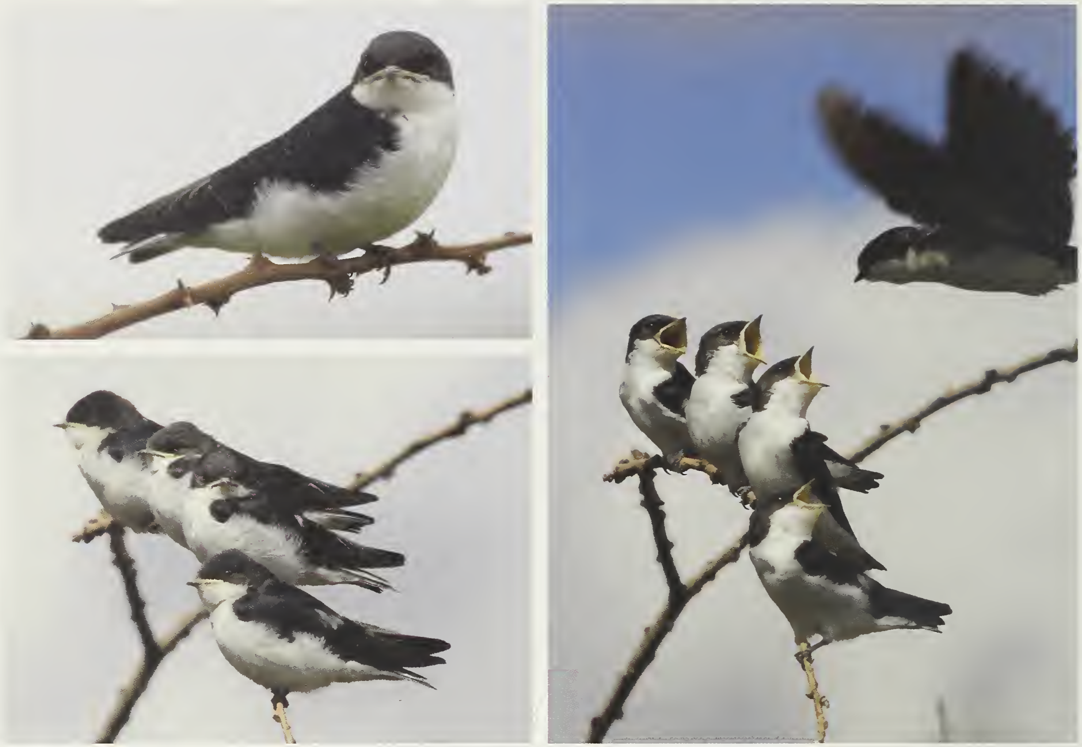


Figure 8. Post-fledging juvenile White-tailed Swallows *Hirundo megaensis* spend their first few days in the vicinity of the nest, often perching on *Acacia* fences while being fed (Andrew Bladon)

Les Hirondelles à queue blanche *Hirundo megaensis* juvéniles passent leurs premiers jours après leur sortie du nid dans les environs de ce dernier, souvent perchés sur des clôtures d'*Acacia* pendant leur nourrissage (Andrew Bladon)

by the extension of greyish-black fringes on individual rectrices (Fig. 9). However, in the field, individuals with less conspicuously white tails may also be juveniles. Late-stage nestlings and recently fledged juveniles have broad greyish-black fringes to their rectrices, producing a much darker overall appearance to their tails even than females. In particular, the innermost tail feathers (r1) are completely greyish black without any white. The other five pairs of rectrices have substantial white on their inner webs, while their outer webs and tips are greyish black. On the outermost rectrix (r6) the white is reduced to a smaller spot on the inner web (Fig. 9). This can make the in-flight separation of juvenile White-tailed and Ethiopian Swallows difficult.

Young birds studied in 2014 showed a marked difference in the development of white in the tail from day 16 onwards, and this was also noticeable in juvenile specimens. This could be individual variation, but might also reflect the sex of the birds.

Tail length

Sexes and age classes differ in tail length (Turner & Rose 1989) and furcation. In adult males at NHMUK, tails are longer than in adult females (mean = 60.4 and 53.5 mm, *n* = 4 and 1 respectively) owing to the extension of the outer rectrices, which leads to more pronounced furcation (mean = 23.1 and 14.0 mm). Pearl-breasted Swallow shows a similar sex difference in tail length (Benson 1949) and range of lengths (Maclean 1993). Size differences between the sexes are visible in the field, with male outer rectrices protruding beyond the tips of the folded wing, while in females these are shorter than the wingtips (Fig. 10). Tails of juveniles are even shorter than those of females (46.3 mm, *n* = 3) but do not seem to differ between the sexes.

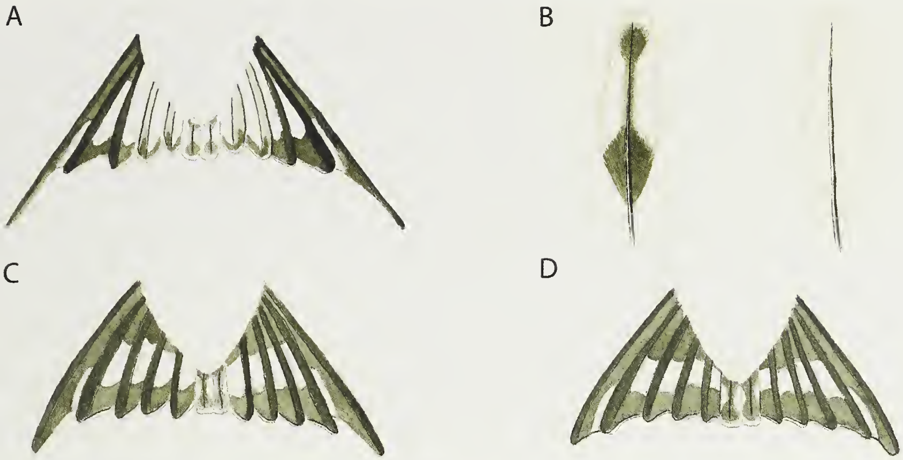


Figure 9. Variation in tail shape and coloration with age and sex of White-tailed Swallow *Hirundo megaensis*. **A:** male, showing a lot of white and long outer rectrices. **B:** variation in tail feather pattern between individual inner rectrices of different males. **C:** female, lacking streamers and with less white than the male, particularly in the inner rectrices. **D:** juvenile, similar to female with slightly smaller white patches and even shorter outer feathers (Stefanie Rick and Till Töpfer)

Variation dans la forme et la coloration de la queue selon l'âge et le sexe de l'Hirondelle à queue blanche *Hirundo megaensis*. **A :** mâle, avec beaucoup de blanc et des longs filets. **B :** variation dans le pattern des rectrices internes de différents mâles. **C :** femelle, sans filets et avec moins de blanc que le mâle, surtout sur les rectrices internes. **D :** juvénile, semblable à la femelle, avec des taches blanches un peu plus petites et des rectrices externes encore plus courtes (Stefanie Rick et Till Töpfer)

General coloration

While the different tail patterns are visible at reasonable distances in flying birds, we found it nearly impossible to distinguish the sexes by overall coloration. Redman *et al.* (2009) stated that females are duller than males, a fact we could confirm only under exceptionally favourable conditions, e.g. in pairs seen at close range perched next to one another (Fig. 10). It is too slight a difference to be useful in the field.

On the other hand, juveniles can be separated from adults in the field by the dull brownish head clearly contrasting with the glossy bluish-black back (Fig. 11), such that they could be mistaken for Grey-rumped Swallows *Pseudhirundo griseopyga*. As with tail coloration, there is marked individual variation in the extent of the gloss in juveniles, especially on the wings, which might be sex-related. In adults the head is the same glossy bluish black as the back and wings. Thus we can confirm 'immature browner' (Redman *et al.* 2009), but only with respect to the head and wings, as other differences in plumage gloss are hardly visible in the field.

Sociability

White-tailed Swallow is most frequently observed alone or in pairs, although groups of up to eight have previously been reported (Ash & Atkins 2009). When nesting, pairs are easy to find around the nest site, the frequency of visits suggesting they forage mostly near the village and its associated livestock. Elsewhere, singles and pairs can be encountered at any time, but like Pearl-breasted Swallow they are inconspicuous (Schmidt 1959) and typically disappear as quickly as they appear. They favour open grassland and less dense *Acacia* woodland, especially areas frequented by cattle herds or wild grazers. They are observed less commonly over *Commiphora*-dominated bushland, and do not occur among denser broad-leaved *Combretum–Terminalia* woodland, which contrasts with the broader range of habitats reported for Pearl-breasted Swallow (Turner 2004, Mellanby *et al.* 2008).

A number of sightings have also been made of larger, probably post-breeding flocks, which appear to contain a high proportion of immatures, and presumably occur in response to insect swarms on which the birds forage. Two favoured

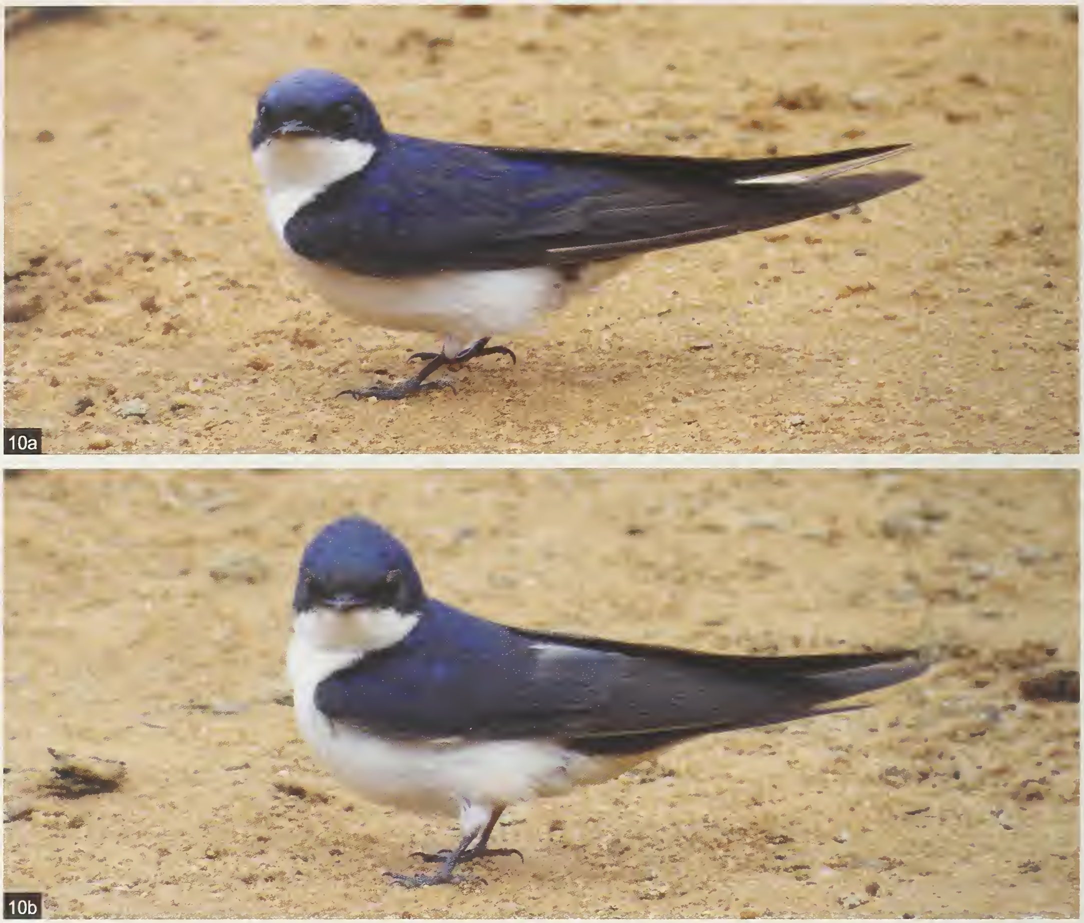


Figure 10. Comparison of adult plumages of White-tailed Swallow *Hirundo megaensis*: **(a)** male; **(b)** female (Kai Gedeon)

Comparaison du plumage adulte de l'Hirondelle à queue blanche *Hirundo megaensis* : **(a)** mâle ; **(b)** femelle (Kai Gedeon)

sites are the Borana cattle ranch at Dida Tuyura, 15 km north-east of Yabello, and the Soda Plain immediately north of the Mega massif (Fig. 12). Both sites offer an open landscape with larger *Acacia* trees and frequent grazing herds. Flocks of up to 10–20 White-tailed Swallows were seen at both sites on a several occasions in the last hour of daylight in May–June 2013 and 2014. On one evening a mixed flock of White-tailed, Ethiopian and Barn Swallows was observed at Dida Tuyura, feeding 3–15 m above open ground, with up to 20 birds simultaneously resting in the canopy of two large trees. The numbers of each species were impossible to determine, but the total number of birds was at least 50. A similar, though smaller, mixed flock was also seen on the morning of 14 April 2014 on Dida Yabello plain.

However, flocking in these and other locations is not confined to evenings. A large flock of *c*.50 White-tailed Swallows, conceivably more, was present on a hot sunny afternoon on 3 June 2010 on the Soda Plain, hawking insects 5–20 m above ground and perching temporarily in the shaded outer subcanopy of two trees, on the opposite side from the sun. The trees held up to ten birds at any time, many of them juveniles. On the morning of 17 November 2012, another flock of *c*.50 White-tailed Swallows was seen *c*.30 m above open grassland on the main road south of Dubluk, near the village of Madacho. Within ten minutes they had all disappeared.

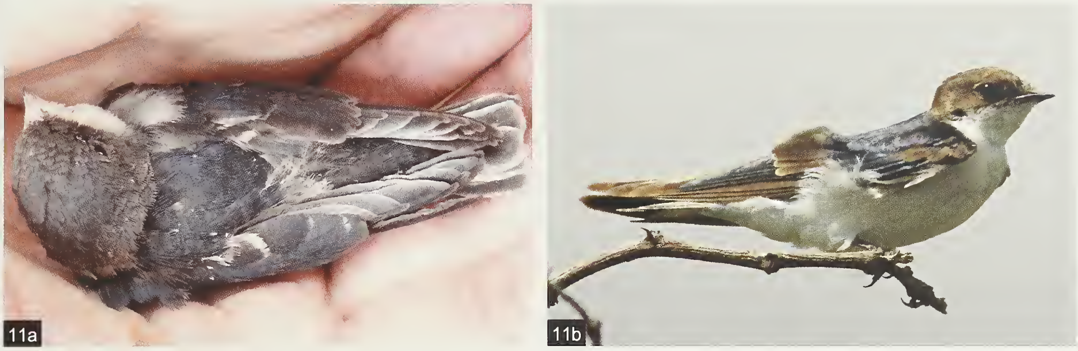


Figure 11. White-tailed Swallow *Hirundo megaensis* **(a)** nestling and **(b)** juvenile, with browner head and wings than the adult (*cf.* Fig. 10). Tail feathers of young birds have whitish fringes; the white windows on the inner webs of rr2–6 are concealed by overlying feathers (Kai Gedeon and Paul Donald)

Hirondelle à queue blanche *Hirundo megaensis* **(a)** oisillon et **(b)** juvénile, avec la tête et les ailes plus brunes que l'adulte (*cf.* Fig. 10). Les rectrices des jeunes ont des bords blanchâtres ; les fenêtres blanches sur les vexilles internes de rr2–6 sont cachées par les plumes superposées (Kai Gedeon et Paul Donald)

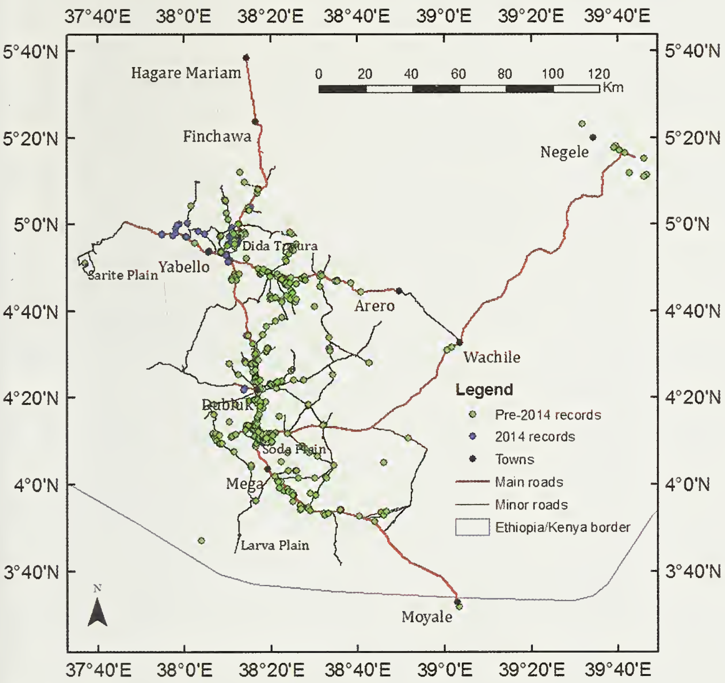


Figure 12. All White-tailed Swallow *Hirundo megaensis* records up to 2014 with available or derivable GPS coordinates (collected by the authors, with additional records from published sources mentioned in the text and others mentioned in the Acknowledgements). In 2014 the species was observed regularly west of Yabello for the first time.

Toutes les mentions de l'Hirondelle à queue blanche *Hirundo megaensis* jusqu'à 2014 avec des coordonnées GPS disponibles ou dérivables (collectées par les auteurs, avec des mentions supplémentaires de sources publiées mentionnées dans le texte et d'autres indiquées dans les Remerciements). En 2014 l'espèce a été observée régulièrement à l'ouest de Yabello pour la première fois.

Further sightings at Liben Plain

The occurrence of White-tailed Swallow on the Liben Plain, south-east of the town of Negele, was first reported by Gabremichael *et al.* (2009) (Fig. 12). Since then, other records have been made, summarised here. One was seen at the western edge of the Liben Plain on 23 May 2009 (M. Gabremichael pers. comm.). In February 2010, MW observed birds in an area of cleared scrub and ungrazed grassland in the south-east scrub/grass ecotone of Liben Plain, and at least five were at the same site on 5 June 2010 (MW, PFD, NJC). A single was seen a few km north of Negele on the road to Kibre Mengist, again in 2010 (S. Rooke pers. comm.). On 22 November 2012, PFD, YD & REG had two sightings of a single on opposite sides of Liben Plain. On 3 July 2013, YD observed two in the south-east of the plain, close to the area used in 2010. Finally, a bird was reported in the area on 3 December 2014 (E. Williams *in Bull. ABC* 22: 104). Birds have also been seen once just west of the town of Wachile and at nearby Melka Guba (M. Gabremichael pers. comm.), halfway between Mega and Negele.

The frequency of sightings from Liben Plain, covering all but one year in 2005–14 and across eight months (October–February and May–July), show that the species occurs regularly in the area. It is unclear, however, if these birds represent a resident breeding population (seven immatures were seen on 31 October 2006: Gabremichael *et al.* 2009) or if there is movement between the core range and the Plain. Lone sightings at Sarite Plain (Syvertsen & Dellelegn 1991), Larva Plain (Ash & Atkins 2009) and near Moyale (Thouless 1996) suggest that some wandering occurs, which is perhaps unsurprising for a hirundine (Fig. 12). The records from Wachile may be the first evidence of birds moving between Yabello/Mega and Negele, or an indication that the species occurs continuously between the two sites but remains undetected owing to the species' low density and lack of survey time. Observers in these areas are encouraged to be vigilant, and to report any records with as much supporting information as possible.

Conservation

Traditional Borana huts clearly provide an important nesting site for White-tailed Swallow, which appears not to utilise larger, more modern buildings, unlike Pearl-breasted Swallow (Maclean 1993). This may be due to displacement by larger hirundines (Harrison *et al.* 1997), but it certainly cannot be attributed to a lack of tolerance of human disturbance, which may affect other species (Turner & Rose 1989). Across the range, the maintenance of traditional houses, with thatched roofs and loose door assemblages, is clearly important for breeding success. Community engagement is also important with respect to recognition of the birds. Mistaken identification as bats can lead to nest destruction, so initiatives by the national park authority to raise awareness of the species may assist conservation efforts.

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Predation of seabird eggs by Common Mynas *Acridotheres tristis* on Bird Island, Seychelles, and its broader implications

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Prédation d'œufs d'oiseaux de mer par le Martin triste *Acridotheres tristis* à **Bird Island, Seychelles, et ses implications plus larges.** Des études récentes sur des oiseaux de mer nichant à Bird Island, Seychelles, ont démontré la capacité des Martins tristes *Acridotheres tristis* d'infliger une prédation importante à des œufs si d'autres facteurs, en particulier le dérangement par l'homme, entrent en jeu. Des observations sur d'autres îles des Seychelles indiquent que la prédation et l'ingérence des Martins tristes pourraient également empêcher l'etablissement de colonies fondatrices par des oiseaux de mer qui sont en train d'étendre leur aire de distribution, ou des tentatives de ré-établissement de colonies d'oiseaux de mer sur des îles d'où elles ont été éliminées par des activités humaines. Des Martins tristes ont été introduits sur maintes îles tropicales dans les trois océans majeurs, et les impacts sur les oiseaux de mer identifiés ici sont insidieux et peuvent être plus répandus que l'on ne pense. Ceci doit être pris en compte par les chercheurs concevant des études d'oiseaux de mer et par ceux entreprenant des projets d'éco-tourisme sur des îles où se trouvent des Martins tristes.

Summary. Recent studies of nesting seabirds on Bird Island, Seychelles, have demonstrated the capacity for Common Mynas *Acridotheres tristis* to inflict high predation on eggs when combined with other factors, especially human disturbance. Observations on other islands in Seychelles suggest that predation and interference by Common Mynas might also inhibit the establishment of founder colonies by seabirds that are expanding their ranges, or attempts to re-establish seabird colonies on islands from which they were once extirpated by human activities. Common Mynas have been introduced on many tropical islands in the world's three major oceans, and the impacts on seabirds identified here are insidious and may be more widespread than presently appreciated. This must be taken into account by researchers designing studies of seabirds and by those undertaking eco-tourism developments on islands where Common Mynas are present.

Common Mynas *Acridotheres tristis* have been introduced from their native range in southern Asia to many tropical islands and to some subtropical / temperate / continental regions (Feare & Craig 1998). Where introduced they are considered to be invasive aliens (IUCN 2014) on account of their alleged impacts on indigenous biota (along with some agricultural and public health concerns). Robust evidence for negative effects on indigenous birds has proved difficult to demonstrate (e.g. Pell & Tidemann 1997, Tindall *et al.* 2007) and such effects can vary with environmental conditions (Lowe *et al.* 2011, Grarock *et al.* 2012, 2013). Information on the impacts of Common Mynas on indigenous biota in different environments can thus be important to inform what mitigation measures, if any, are appropriate, practicable and justifiable. Here we report new findings on Common Myna (hereafter 'myna') predation of seabirds on Bird Island, Seychelles, western Indian Ocean, and the influence that human disturbance can have on the extent of predation. In light of these observations, we consider possible effects of mynas, and their management, on other islands with seabird breeding colonies within the Seychelles archipelago.

All of the islands considered here, except Récif, underwent habitat transformation in the late 19th century with the planting and management of coconut trees *Cocos nucifera*, involving the removal of indigenous woodland and maintenance of minimal ground layer vegetation, until the demise of the coconut industry in the 1960s.

Islands considered

Bird Island (03°43'S 55°12'E, 90 ha, low-lying coral sand cay)

Until the late 19th century largely treeless Bird Island hosted a huge Sooty Tern *Onychoprion fuscatus* colony (Thomas & Robinson 1771, Coppinger 1887, Fryer 1910) of possibly *c.*5,000,000 pairs (CJF unpubl.) and other ground-nesting seabirds, including Masked *Sula dactylatra* and probably Brown Boobies *S.*

leucogaster (Coppinger 1887, Fryer 1910, Vesey-Fitzgerald 1941). Coconut planting led to a considerable reduction in the Sooty Tern colony, with only *c.*18,000 pairs remaining in 1955 (Ridley & Percy 1958). Boobies ceased breeding during this period.

Removal of coconut trees around the Sooty Tern colony commenced in 1967, and by 1973 *c.*395,000 pairs were breeding (Feare 1976a). The colony is now a tourist attraction for visitors to the small hotel. Cessation of maintenance of short vegetation between the remaining coconut trees led to the development of a woodland of native broadleaved trees, especially *Pisonia grandis*, *Cordia subcordata*, *Thespesia populnea* and *Guettarda speciosa*. Additional woodland species were introduced for ornamental reasons. This woodland provides habitat for tree-nesting seabirds, including Brown Noddies *Anous stolidus*, White Terns *Gygis alba* and, more recently, Lesser Noddies *Anous tenuirostris*. Tourists are permitted to walk anywhere on the island, but are discouraged from entering the Sooty Tern colony; many of the island's breeding seabirds, especially those that nest around the hotel, can therefore be subjected to human disturbance.

Black Rats *Rattus rattus*, introduced among building materials during hotel construction in the late 1960s, were successfully eradicated in 1996–97 (Merton *et al.* 2002). Mynas were first documented on Bird Island in 1972 (Feare 1979), but the details of their introduction is unknown. Vesey-Fitzgerald (1941) did not record them.

Denis (03°48'S 55°41'E, 140 ha, low-lying coral sand cay)

When first described, Denis Island supported a large population of seabirds among grassy vegetation and in trees—from the description probably *Pisonia grandis* (de Trobriand 1777). Early reports, however, are too vague for specific identification (Stoddart & Fosberg 1981).

Since the 1960s a tall diverse woodland has developed, while maintenance of the island is supported by tourism and farming. Recent island rehabilitation has included the eradication of cats *Felis catus* and Black Rats (Millet *et al.* 2004), replacement of coconut trees with broadleaved species and the introduction of four of Seychelles' threatened endemic landbirds—Seychelles Fody *Foudia sechellarum* and Seychelles Warbler *Acrocephalus sechellensis* (2004) and Seychelles Magpie Robin *Copsychus sechellarum* and Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone corvina* (2008)—to establish 'insurance' populations.

The date of introduction of mynas is unknown, but prior to the introduction of the endemic birds an eradication attempt was unsuccessful (Millet *et al.* 2004). A second attempt was initiated in 2010 and is ongoing; >90% of the original population has now been removed (CJF unpubl.).

Frégate (04°36'S 55°57'E, 220 ha, hilly granitic island)

From the 1960s to the 1990s, Frégate was the only island on which the Seychelles Magpie Robin survived, with a population of just *c.*12 individuals, and mynas were found to be interfering with breeding attempts (Komdeur 1996). Various attempts were made to reduce their numbers and by 2002 only eight mynas were estimated to remain (Millet *et al.* 2004). Thereafter control ceased and numbers increased to >700 individuals until complete eradication was successful in 2010–11 (Canning 2011).

From the 1990s to the present, island rehabilitation has included restoration of indigenous woodland following the demise of the coconut industry, and eradication of cats in 1977 and Brown Rats *Rattus norvegicus* in 2000 (Henriette Payet 2007).

Aride (04°13'S 55°40'E, 70 ha), **Cousin** (04°20'S 55°40'E, 30 ha) ***and Cousine*** (04°21'S 55°39'E, 26 ha), all hilly granitic islands

These three islands had remained rat-free and had retained large seabird populations and some endemic birds and reptiles. All have undergone restoration of native woodland and removal of exotic vegetation, to the extent that all are now largely wooded with little open space and have only small human populations. These habitats are not favoured by mynas (Feare & Craig 1998) and they do not breed on any of these three islands. Any mynas that arrive from nearby islands are shot as soon as possible (e.g. Samways *et al.* 2010).

Récif (04°35'S 55°46'E, 20 ha, rocky islet).

Dominated by herbaceous vegetation, the only bushes being a clump of low *Scaevola sericea* restricted to a small sand spit, Récif supports ground-nesting Sooty and Bridled Terns

Onychoprion anaethetus. Mynas do not occur. Lesser Noddies did not breed in the mid-1990s but had established a small colony in the *Scaevola* by 2002 (Feare 2003). The island is uninhabited and not visited by tourists, but Environment Department staff are stationed there during the main nesting season (May–August) to prevent poaching of seabird eggs.

Observed effects of mynas on seabirds on Bird Island

During the day Common Mynas are found throughout the island, in woodland and especially in areas of open grassland around the hotel and on the airstrip. Pairs remain together year-round (Feare & Craig 1998), but they sometimes coalesce into larger flocks, especially on grassland in the evenings prior to roosting communally. Observations in 2014 of pairs, in which one member was individually identifiable by its plumage abnormalities, showed that they occupied consistent feeding areas by day but defence of these against neighbouring pairs was lax, leading to overlap in their feeding ranges (CJF pers. obs.). During the Sooty Tern breeding season, from May to October, Feare (1976a) reported mynas taking unguarded eggs from around the colony's periphery but concluded that they had no significant impact on the population. When Sooty Terns are absent from the island, mynas regularly feed in the deserted nesting area, mainly on insects. In July 2014 the myna population, estimated from a count of birds entering their communal roost in a large *Calophyllum inophyllum* tree in the evening, was a minimum of 150 birds.

In the absence of disturbance, Sooty Terns leave eggs unguarded for brief periods when incubating adults fly to the sea close inshore to drink, and sometimes to wet their feet and belly feathers with which they moisten the surface of the egg on returning to the nest (Schreiber *et al.* 2002). Such absences are thus a natural and regular occurrence, but adults also leave their eggs during disturbances by large potential predators, especially humans. Mynas appear reluctant to enter the colony; on Bird Island Sooty Terns nest densely (Feare *et al.* 1997) with a median nearest-neighbour distance of 38 cm (Feare & Larose 2014) and mynas would be subjected to powerful stabs from Sooty Tern bills, as are humans and land crabs *Ocypode cordimana*. Sooty Terns at the edges of the colony are more prone to leave their eggs during disturbances than birds in the heart of the colony, and in 2014 mynas were seen to take advantage of such disturbance. Pairs of mynas perched in trees and bushes around the colony margins, flying down to seize unprotected eggs. The frequency with which CJF & CSL encountered a small group of mynas (4–5 pairs) on an access path into the colony, used daily by them to check the progress of specific Sooty Tern nests and also by tourists to view the colony, raises the possibility that mynas might maintain vigilance for, or even follow, potential sources of disturbance in anticipation of feeding opportunities.

Prior to the planting of coconuts, Brown Noddies nested in coastal *Scaevola sericea* and *Tournefortia argentea* bushes (Fryer 1910), as they do today. The crowns of coconut palms provide abundant nest sites, however, and in 1972 the island's population was estimated at *c.*10,000 pairs (Feare 1979). Following the eradication of Black Rats, Brown Noddies began nesting on the ground at the bases of trees, especially *Casuarina*, and also in unmown grass and other herb vegetation in the otherwise mown lawns of the hotel. These nests are single or clumped in small groups in the available habitat. In 2014 clumps contained 2–19 nests with a median nearest-neighbour distance of 1.5 m (n = 46 nests).

While catching incubating ground-nesting adult Brown Noddies for ringing and other studies in 2013 and 2014, CL & MD discovered that while adults were being processed, mynas rapidly approached the unguarded nests and took the eggs. Eggs were sometimes taken less than one minute after the breeding adult was captured and the egg was left unguarded. Of the 31 nests on the ground that were monitored for the purpose of the ringing study, egg predation by mynas was observed in three cases. Four other eggs were lost the day after the noddies were processed, potentially also resulting from myna predation, although we cannot exclude the possibility that other potential predators, Common Moorhens *Gallinula chloropus* or land crabs, could have been involved. After CL & MD realised that such rapid and frequent myna predation was occurring, all eggs of birds caught for processing were temporarily covered with a cloth, which was removed only after the noddies were observed

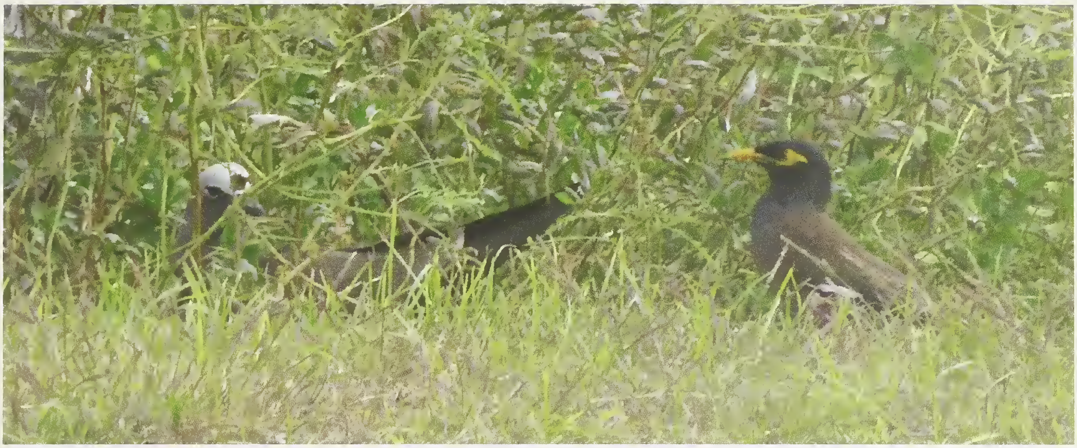

Figure 1. Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis* apparently attempting to distract an incubating Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* at its nest on the ground, Bird Island, August 2014 (Chris J. Feare)

Martin triste *Acridotheres tristis* essayant apparemment de distraire un Noddi brun *Anous stolidus* en train de couver, Bird Island, août 2014 (Chris J. Feare)

flying back to their nests (usually within five minutes). This simple protection method was successful as none of the eggs in the remaining nests that we monitored was predated within the 24 hours after the birds were captured.

In addition to responding to disturbance caused by people, we observed mynas approaching incubating Brown Noddies on nests on the ground on many occasions. One member of a foraging pair walked towards an incubating noddy and approached it to within *c*.0.5 m. This myna either stood looking at the noddy (Fig. 1) or walked backwards and forwards around the incubating bird while the myna's mate continued foraging in nearby grass, periodically looking at its mate. We did not see a myna take an egg during these observations, but it appeared that any further disturbance that would have led the noddy to leave its egg would have resulted in its loss.

The initiation of breeding by Lesser Noddies on Bird Island in 1984 (G. Norah pers. comm.), which pre-dated the eradication of Black Rats in 1996–97, was preceded by the roosting at night by more than 10,000 birds in trees in the centre of the island (Feare 1979). This large potential founder group might have facilitated breeding in the presence of both an established myna population (but relatively small compared to that on neighbouring Denis Island, see below) and a large population of Black Rats. Lesser Noddies now nest in tall *Pisonia grandis*, *Guettarda speciosa*, *Calophyllum inophyllum*, *Cordia subcordata*, *Thespesia populnea*, and, especially, introduced *Cordia sebestena* in the hotel area. These ornamental trees are rarely taller than *c*.5 m and Lesser Noddies nest densely in them (median nearest-neighbour nest distance 50 cm; $n = 70$ nests). At the approach of humans, nesting Lesser Noddies become agitated and highly vocal, and in 2011–14 CJF & CSL noticed that such agitation and calling was also stimulated by the arrival of a pair of mynas in a nesting tree (Fig. 2). Closer observation revealed that pairs of mynas climbed among the branches, sometimes leading a Lesser Noddy to leave its nest in an attempt to deter the myna, but the unattended egg was quickly taken. The members of the pair appeared to be working together, one creating a distraction that permitted the other to take the egg. Disturbance by humans, including unwitting tourists when taking photographs, could leave eggs open to predation when mynas are present.

In June–July 2014, 82 incubating Lesser Noddies were caught for ringing and other investigation and CL, MD & CSL noticed that before some adults returned to their nests, which was usually within 5–10 minutes after catching, their eggs had been taken. This occurred with four of the first five nests from which breeding adults were captured. Although predation by mynas was not directly observed, due to the density

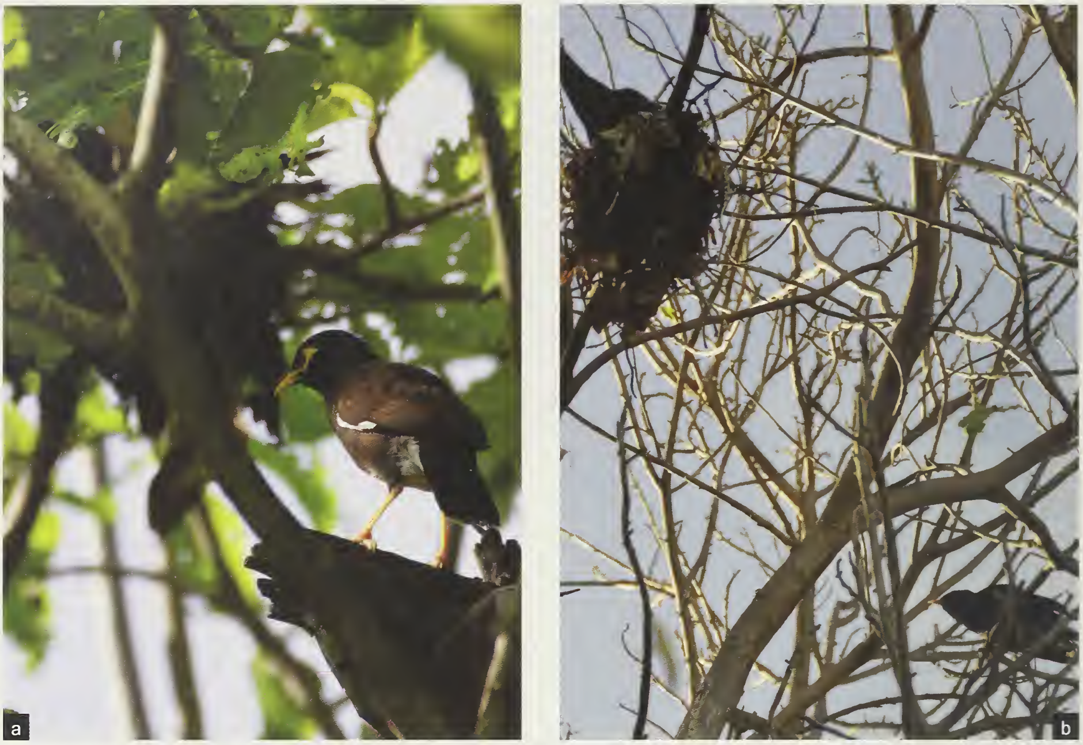

Figure 2. Common Mynas *Acridotheres tristis* approaching Lesser Noddy *Anous tenuirostris* nests in **(a)** living and **(b)** dead *Cordia sebestena* trees, on Bird Island, July 2014 (Camille Lebarbenchon)

Martins tristes *Acridotheres tristis* s'approchant de nids du Noddi marianne *Anous tenuirostris* dans des arbres *Cordia sebestena* vivants **(a)** et morts **(b)**, Bird Island, juillet 2014 (Camille Lebarbenchon)

of leaves in the trees used for nesting, previous observations on Brown Noddies suggested that a similar scenario probably occurred. To prevent further predation each egg was covered with a cloth or large leaf that was only removed after the captured birds returned to the vicinity of their nest. This prevented further egg predation.

Mynas and seabirds on other Seychelles islands

The other main seabird islands of Seychelles, Aride, Cousin and Cousine, host large seabird populations with both tree- and ground-nesting species, but largely lack mynas. In the early 1970s these were the only islands on which Lesser Noddies nested in Seychelles (Penny 1974). Cousin and Cousine lost their small colonies of Sooty Terns in the mid-20th century, probably as a result of excessive harvesting of their eggs (Feare 1976b) but Aride retains a large but declining Sooty Tern colony (probably due to forest growth). Cousine retained some open grassy slopes on hillsides and over the last 15 years a small Sooty Tern breeding population has re-established (Samways *et al.* 2010). Tourists visiting these islands have controlled access to minimise disturbance and rapid removal of any arriving mynas ensures that they are not a threat.

Denis Island is largely wooded and has fewer breeding seabirds than the islands mentioned above, restricted largely to small numbers of Brown Noddies and White Terns. Introductions of endemic landbirds did not achieve the success of endemic bird introductions on other islands and research on one species, Seychelles Warbler, revealed low breeding success and poor adult female survival, for which myna predation was suspected (van der Woude *et al.* 2013). Following the large reduction in myna numbers that commenced in 2010, populations of the four species of endemic birds have increased, as has female survival in Seychelles Warblers (van der Woude *et al.* 2013, Bristol 2014). Seabird populations on Denis Island are not formally monitored, but during a visit in April 2012, CJF was struck by the number of White Terns, which appeared to have increased considerably since his previous visits in May and October 2011. In addition to the larger numbers, in April 2012 many White Terns were nesting much lower in trees and bushes than on previous visits.

Small numbers of Lesser Noddies have roosted at night in tall *Casuarina* trees at the southern end of Denis Island, some of them remaining during the day, since at least the early 2000s. In this area, an understorey of young *Pisonia grandis* has developed, possibly introduced from seeds carried on the plumage of Lesser Noddies. In May 2014 CJF & CSL failed to find roosting Lesser Noddies here, but <100 birds were observed in the evenings flying into tall trees in the centre of the island to roost. In August 2014, however, *c.*25 active nests were reported in two small groups near the south of the island (M. Mason & A. Labiche pers. comm., CJF pers. obs.). Initiation of breeding on Denis Island by Lesser Noddies followed the main reduction in the number of mynas in 2011–12 and coincided with a further attempt to complete their eradication that began in May 2014.

Colonisation of Frégate Island by Lesser Noddies in the early 1990s occurred at a time when the number of mynas was being reduced (Millet *et al.* 2004). Mynas were successfully eradicated in early 2011 (Canning 2011) and the island now has a large Lesser Noddy population. On a visit to Frégate in June 2013, CJF & CSL found exceptional numbers of nesting White Terns, along with huge numbers in the air, appearing to them to represent the densest colony they had seen in Seychelles. E. Henriette (pers. comm.) reported that White Terns were plentiful on Frégate in 2001–03 but that numbers declined subsequently. This reduction in White Tern numbers coincided with a cessation of myna control, which had reduced the island's population to an estimated eight mynas, and the ensuing increase to >700 birds, prior to their eradication. However, E. Henriette also noted that the death, due to disease, of *Pterocarpus indicus* trees that had provided important nest sites, might also have contributed to the decline in the White Tern population since the early 2000s. If the apparent recent increases in White Tern populations on Frégate and Denis are genuine, the rapidity of the increases following myna reduction / eradication suggests that increased breeding success on the islands might be accompanied by immigration.

On Récif, Lesser Noddies established a breeding colony in low bushes that elsewhere in Seychelles would have been considered entirely inappropriate habitat. This suggests that expansion of Seychelles' Lesser Noddy population at the turn of the century involved seeking new islands on which to establish colonies. Colonisation of Récif was probably facilitated by its lack of predators, including mynas, and minimal human disturbance.

Discussion

Common Mynas have previously been reported taking eggs of gulls (*Larus*) and terns (*Onychoprion*, *Anous*), and attacking adult Black Noddies *Anous minutus* and White Terns on Midway Atoll (Grant 1982, Tyler 1988, Richardson 1992), but to our knowledge this is the first time that predation of eggs of Lesser Noddies has been documented. In most cases the impact on susceptible populations has been considered minimal (Feare & Craig 1998) but on Kauai, Hawaii, Byrd (1979) recorded mynas taking 23% of Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus* eggs from their burrows. The low impact of myna predation on Sooty Tern eggs on Bird Island stems from the species' inability to enter the colony (Feare 1976), but where Sooty Terns nest at lower densities predation can be more damaging. On Ascension Island, South Atlantic, nest density of Sooty Terns is lower than on Bird Island (Ascension <2.5 nests/m^2, Hughes 2014; Bird Island <6 nests/m^2, Feare *et al.* 1997) and, in addition to taking eggs, myna predation on Ascension leads to the desertion of eggs by surrounding birds, leaving spatial voids where predation has occurred (Hughes *et al.* 2008). It thus appears that mynas take advantage of low nest density in colonies to enter without risk of attack from closely packed birds. This also seems to be the case with Brown and Lesser Noddies on Bird Island.

The establishment of Lesser Noddy breeding populations on Denis and Frégate at the time of reduced numbers of mynas suggests that the presence of large numbers of mynas might also prevent the establishment of new colonies, as small numbers of nesting birds could be more susceptible to predation than birds nesting in large colonies, on otherwise apparently suitable islands.

Bird Island's ground-nesting Brown Noddies were dispersed in small groups, in which nests were more widely separated than those of Sooty Terns. The arrival of an intruder promoted some individual Brown Noddies to leave the nest and fly at the intruder calling loudly, leaving the egg unprotected. This wide spacing of both groups and nests confers no protection from neighbours for unguarded eggs. Although Lesser Noddies nest at higher densities than Brown Noddies on Bird Island, the communal defence of Lesser Noddies is largely vocal, with most birds in the group calling loudly and some disturbed birds flying towards intruders, but fluttering around them, rather than attacking. However, the dispersion of nests of Lesser Noddies is three-dimensional within the tree canopy, providing mynas with opportunities to create their own disturbance and approach unguarded eggs from directions that can minimise interference from neighbouring nest owners. Lesser Noddies are much smaller (on Bird Island in June–July 2014, mean 96 g, *n* = 173) than Brown Noddies (mean 190 g, *n* = 151) and Sooty Terns (mean 199 g, *n* = 104; all authors' unpubl. data). Although Lesser Noddy defence is more communal than that of Brown Noddies, their behaviour, to the human intruder at least, appears to be less intimidating than that of their larger relatives.

Mynas are opportunistic predators and appear to capitalise on any disturbance, including that due to passing humans. The impacts on seabirds that we observed, however, are insidious and easily overlooked. There are clear implications of our observations for research, island rehabilitation and tourism. In the absence of frequent disturbance, myna predation may be inconsequential in terms of seabird population sustainability. On islands where tourism is an important activity, myna predation could have more serious effects. This could be especially significant on islands that support small populations of endangered seabirds, but will be less important where seabird breeding colonies can exchange individuals with other colonies within a metapopulation, as with Sooty Terns in Seychelles (Feare & Lesperance 2002). Conservation managers and advisors on islands that support tourism should plan tourist access, and the planting of trees likely to be colonised by seabirds, to minimise disturbance to the seabirds that form part of the island's attraction. Investigators of seabird biology on islands inhabited by mynas must be aware that their own activities could significantly depress nesting success unless protective measures are taken. In addition, those seeking to establish new breeding seabird colonies, especially of those species that nest in small colonies with widely spaced nests, should be aware that the presence of large numbers of mynas on islands could be a constraint on success.

All of these problems could be avoided, however, by preventing the establishment of mynas on offshore islands and eradicating existing myna populations (Feare 2010, Canning 2011), which would certainly benefit endemic landbirds (van der Woude *et al.* 2013, Bristol 2014) and possibly other biota, and especially when attempting to re-introduce birds to former strongholds.

Acknowledgements

We are extremely grateful to the owners of Bird Island, Guy & Marie France Savy and their family, for their continuing support of our research on its seabirds. Observations on other islands were made during the course of work facilitated by Mickey & Kathy Mason and Green Islands Foundation (Denis Island), the Conservation Department of the Ministry of Environment and Energy of the Seychelles government (Récif Island), Dane Marx and the management of Frégate Island, and Kevin & San Marie Jolliffe on Cousine Island. John Nevill kindly provided literature pertaining to Denis Island and Adrian Skerrett reviewed the paper.

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Bird functional diversity in the Yangambi Biosphere Reserve, DR Congo

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Diversité fonctionnelle des oiseaux dans la Réserve de Biosphère de Yangambi, RD Congo. Un inventaire des oiseaux du sous-bois a été fait dans la Réserve de biosphère de Yangambi, RD Congo, en septembre 2012, à l'aide de filets japonais. L'objectif était de comparer la présence des oiseaux en forêt primaire, en forêt secondaire et en forêt de transition dans cette zone tropicale humide de basse altitude. Au total, 51 espèces ont été capturées, dont la majorité étaient des spécialistes des forêts, y compris deux taxons quasi-endémiques au Bassin du Congo. L'abondance relative était légèrement plus élevée en forêt primaire qu'en forêt secondaire, et nettement plus faible dans la zone de transition. De 44 espèces forestières, 14 ont été trouvées uniquement en forêt primaire, dont 11 insectivores. L'abondance relative des insectivores diminue avec la dégradation de la forêt.

Summary. A survey of understorey bird species occurring in old-growth forest, regrowth forest and transition zones in the Yangambi Man and Biosphere Reserve, DR Congo, was carried out on 5–24 September 2012 using mist-nets. In total, 51 species were captured, the majority forest specialists, including two Congo Basin near-endemics. Relative abundance was slightly higher in old-growth forest than in regrowth forest, and distinctly lower in the transition zone. Of the 44 forest-dependent species, 14 were recorded only in old-growth forest, 11 of which were insectivores. Relative abundance of insectivores declined with forest degradation.

The tropical rainforest of the Congo Basin is a biodiversity hotspot, with >1,000 bird species recorded. Habitat degradation can have a severe impact on species presence, e.g. by causing changes in vegetation structure or shifts in food abundance. Such alterations are expected to affect different functional bird groups in different ways, with insectivores expected to be most sensitive to forest disturbance. In the Afrotropical region, this has been demonstrated for large insectivores (Fjeldså 1999), terrestrial or understorey insectivores (Sekercioğlu 2002, Waltert *et al.* 2005, Newmark 2006, Dunham 2008), ground-foragers (Dranzoa 1998, Dale *et al.* 1999), ant-followers (Waltert *et al.* 2005), leaf-gleaners (Owiunji & Plumptre 1998, Dale *et al.* 1999,Waltert *et al.* 2005), bark-gleaners (Dale *et al.* 1999) and some sallying insectivores (Plumptre 1997, Owiunji & Plumptre 1998). However, some studies suggest that certain insect predators increase with forest degradation, such as sallying insectivores at the forest edge (Dale *et al.* 1999), insect gleaners in moderately disturbed forest (Newmark 2006) and bark-gleaners in logged forest (Owiunji & Plumptre 1998). In one study, insectivores increased following logging in a regrowth forest (Owiunji 2001).

Few data are available on the effects of forest modification on the avian functional diversity and feeding guilds in the Congo Basin: just one study, undertaken in the Ituri Forest of north-eastern DR Congo (Plumptre 1997), is known to us. The effects have been more comprehensively documented elsewhere, e.g. in Cameroon (Waltert *et al.* 2005), Côte d'Ivoire (Dunham 2008), Tanzania (Fjeldså 1999, Newmark 2006) and Uganda (Dranzoa 1998, Owiunji & Plumptre 1998, Dale *et al.* 1999, Owiunji 2001, Sekercioğlu 2002, Naidoo 2004).

Study area

Yangambi Man and Biosphere Reserve (Y-MAB) is located on the Congo River, west of Kisangani (Tshopo District, Oriental Province), at *c.*500 m altitude. Covering *c.*235,000 ha, it is the largest of the three UNESCO Biosphere Reserves in DR Congo (*cf.* www.unesco.org/mabdb/bios1-2.htm). The reserve lies within the Guinea-Congo Forests biome, in the south-western part of the North-eastern Congolian Lowland Forests (Fishpool & Evans 2001, WWF 2012).

Y-MAB is the study area for the 'Congo Basin integrated monitoring for forest carbon mitigation and biodiversity' (COBIMFO) project, which aims to establish possible links between

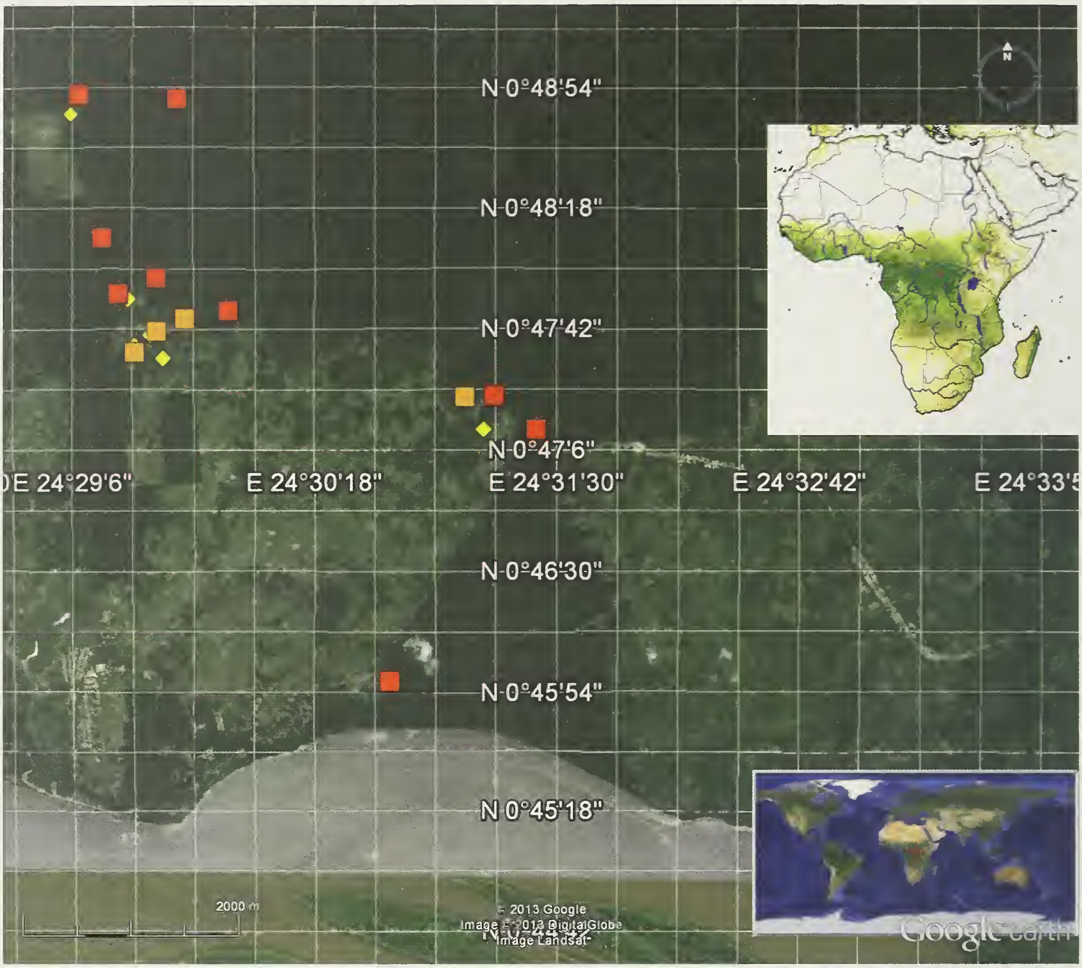

Figure 1. Location of the study area in the Yangambi Biosphere Reserve (red point on inset map; © RCMA), DR Congo, with the 19 survey sites (red square = old-growth forest, orange square = regrowth forest, yellow diamond = transition zone); © Google Image 2013, © DigitalGlobe Image Landsat 2013.

Localisation de la zone d'étude comprenant 19 sites d'inventaire, catégorisés en trois principaux types d'habitat (symboles : carré rouge = forêt primaire, carré orange = forêt secondaire, losange jaune = zone de transition) dans la Réserve de Biosphère à Yangambi (point rouge sur l'encart ; © RMCA), RD Congo ; © Google Image 2013, © DigitalGlobe Image Landsat 2013.

carbon balance and biodiversity in pristine and deteriorated tropical rainforests. A recent report (Toirambe *et al.* 2010) includes a very incomplete bird species list. Our aim was to assess current avifaunal richness and investigate possible differences between habitat types, focusing on the presence and relative abundance of particular functional species groups, such as different forest-dependence classes and feeding guilds. This is not only potentially useful for improving bird conservation, but also permits predictions of changes in birds' ecosystem services (see Wenny *et al.* 2011 *in* Sekercioğlu 2012). Benefits to humans from ecosystems include invertebrate pest control by insectivores, pollination by nectarivores and seed dispersal by frugivores. Some economic activities occur within the reserve, causing human pressure (Toirambe *et al.* 2010) due to hunting, land-use changes and small-scale deforestation.

Due to difficulty of access to most areas, and political instability, data on the Congolese avifauna in general and that of the Yangambi region in particular are scarce (Demey & Louette 2001). The Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA) holds specimens from Yangambi and neighbouring localities, collected between the late 19th and mid-20th centuries (Schouteden 1948–60). However, the biological information accompanying these specimens is limited. During their ornithological exploration of the Congo River *c.*100 years ago, Chapin and Lang passed Yangambi, and investigated the area north-east of Kisangani (Chapin 1932). More recently, international collaboration has enabled some avian studies in the region, including random mist-netting during the Congo River Expedition of 2010 (Louette *et al.* 1995, Upoki 2001, Voelker *et al.* 2013, Bapeamoni 2014).

Here we report the findings of a mist-netting survey undertaken just north-east of the centre of Yangambi, at 00°45'–00°50'N 24°29'–24°32'E, on 5–24 September 2012, by the first two authors (Fig. 1). Nineteen sites within a c.2.5 km radius were selected: 13 forest sites and six sites in the transition zone. Main habitat types were:

- Old-growth forest (OGF; nine sites): mature forest (i.e. primary forest), with closed canopy, including subtypes differentiated by diagnostic species: one of *Gilbertiodendron* (climax forest with *G. dewevrei* dominant, typically with a sparse understorey), one of *Brachystegia* (climax forest with *B. laurentii* dominant, and a moderately open undergrowth) and seven of *Scorodophloeus* forest (comprising three 'mixed' and four 'edge' sites, in places with a very dense undergrowth).
- Regrowth forest (RGF; four sites in *Musanga* forest): young forest re-growing following disturbance (i.e. secondary forest), in places with an open canopy, including different stages of fragmentation and development (from fallow to young tall forest), consequently involving a greater habitat heterogeneity, adjacent to agricultural land at forest edges.
- Transition zone (TZ; six sites): mixed-rural habitat between forest and (post-)agricultural land, including thickets or very degraded forest patches.

These forest habitat types differ in vegetation structure, including canopy cover, and can be ordered along a successional vegetation gradient (basically from TZ via RGF to OGF). Abiotic and biotic parameters were sampled by members of the COBIMFO project via a plot-based design of various types.

Weather was relatively stable during the study period, the dry season lasting longer than usual, until the second half of September (rather than the end of August). The wet season commenced with some overnight showers and a few heavy downpours on several afternoons but, overall, the effects on field work were negligible.

Methods

Mist-netting

Twenty ground-level mist-nets were erected, spread over max. 3 adjacent sites simultaneously: 4–6 nets (i.e. 40–67 m) per RGF or OGF site, and 1–4 nets (i.e. 9–44 m) per TZ. Thus, max. 217 m of net length was in use simultaneously. Geographic coordinates of all mist-nets were recorded using a GPS. Opened nets were checked regularly during the daytime (between dawn, at *c.*06.00 hrs, and dusk, at *c.*18.00 hrs). Following 2–5 days at each site, nets were moved. Mist-nets were set for a total of 38,310 metre-net-hours (mnh), divided unevenly between the three main habitat types: 23,157 mnh in OGF, 9,425 mnh in RGF and 5,728 mnh in TZ. By taking the trap intensity in mnh into account, we calculated relative abundance as capture rate in numbers of birds per 100 mnh, to compare abundance between habitat types. Additional diversity indices were derived, such as species richness, as the absolute number of captured bird species, and Shannon-Wiener index, as a measure of species diversity taking into account the relative abundance of species present in the community, for each habitat type.

Trapped birds were mainly identified using Sinclair & Ryan (2010); difficult individuals were photographed, for subsequent identification using *The Birds of Africa* (*BoA*) handbooks (Brown *et al.* 1982, Urban *et al.* 1986, Fry *et al.* 1988, Urban *et al.* 1997, Fry *et al.* 2000, Fry & Keith 2004) and by examining specimens in the RMCA collection. Species mentioned between parentheses in Appendix 1 are still questionable and *Terpsiphone* (*viridis*) might include some individuals of Bates's Paradise Flycatcher *T. batesi*.

Bird groups

Bird species were assigned to functional groups based on habitat and food preferences (Appendix 1). Three classes of forest-dependence were used (according to Bennun *et al.* 1996, if listed, and additionally *BoA*) and six major feeding guilds, following principally Waltert *et al.* (2005) except two adjustments (for Speckled Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus scolopaceus* and Vieillot's Black Weaver *Ploceus nigerrimus*, due to their mixed food preferences) and based on *BoA*.

Results

Capture rates and diversity indices

In total, 576 individuals of 51 species were mist-netted (Appendix 1), with an overall capture rate of 1.504 birds/100 mnh. Capture rate was highest in OGF (1.589 birds/100 mnh), slightly lower in RGF (1.475 birds/100 mnh) and distinctly lower in TZ (1.205 birds/100 mnh). Between OGF subtypes, differences in relative abundance were subtle: slightly higher in *Gilbertiodendron* forest (1.758 birds/100 mnh) than in *Brachystegia* forest (1.722 birds/100 mnh), but rather lower in *Scorodophloeus* forest (1.537 birds/100 mnh).

Species richness was highest in OGF (minimum 32 species or *c.*61% of all captured species), lower in RGF (minimum 28 species or *c.*55% of all captured species) and lowest in TZ (minimum 17 species or *c.*33% of all captured species). Shannon-Wiener indices for both forest habitat types were higher than for TZ and slightly higher for RGF than for OGF.

Bird community composition

Pycnonotidae (bulbuls) was the dominant family (*c.*60% of all captures, with nine species), in every habitat type. Their aggregate capture rate increased from degraded habitat to mature forest. Yellow-whiskered Greenbul *Andropadus latirostris* (Fig. 2a), a widespread omnivorous bulbul, was the most abundant species (*c.*36%) in every habitat type.

Of the 51 mist-netted species, 35 are restricted to the Guinea-Congo Forests biome. Their relative abundances increased with forest age, with the largest proportion in OGF. This group included two near-endemics, Jameson's Antpecker *Parmoptila jamesoni* (Fig. 2g) and Grant's Bluebill *Spermophaga poliogenys* (Fig. 2h).

Forest-dependence

Forty-four species were forest-dependent: forest specialists (30) were slightly more abundant than forest generalists (14). The rest was formed by seven forest visitors or open-habitat species.

The relative abundance of forest specialists declined with forest degradation, whereas forest generalists were more abundant in degraded habitat. Capture rates of forest visitors or open-habitat species increased slightly with forest alteration.

The three habitats were dominated by forest-dependent classes. Within OGF, the majority was formed by forest specialists (0.941 birds/100 mnh), beside a notable proportion of forest generalists (0.613 birds/100 mnh) and just a few forest visitors (0.030 birds/100 mnh). RGF was intermediate, characterised by balanced proportions of the different classes of forest-dependence, of which forest generalists were most prevalent (0.891 birds/100 mnh). TZ supported a mixed avifauna of mainly generalists (0.855 birds/100 mnh). TZ's minority comprised remarkably more forest specialists (0.279 birds/100 mnh) than forest visitors or open-habitat species (0.087 birds/100 mnh).

Of the 44 forest-dependent species, 14 were captured only in OGF, of which 11, i.e. the majority, were insectivores. These insect predators consisted mainly of forest specialists: ten species, including African Dwarf Kingfisher *Ceyx lecontei*, African Piculet *Sasia africana* (Fig. 2d), Rufous-sided Broadbill *Smithornis rufolateralis* (Fig. 2e), Red-tailed Bristlebill *Bleda syndactylus* (Fig. 2c), Grey-headed Sunbird *Deleornis axillaris* (Fig. 2f) and Jameson's Antpecker, and one generalist (African Emerald Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx cupreus*). Additionally, just one insectivorous forest visitor (African Pygmy Kingfisher *Ceyx pictus*) was captured only in OGF. Thus, 12 insectivores were not trapped in degraded habitat. About half of the remaining insectivores, such as Icterine *Phyllastrephus icterinus* and Xavier's Greenbuls *P. xavieri* (Fig. 2b), occurred in smaller numbers in degraded habitat than in OGF. We trapped substantially fewer species and individuals of insectivores in degraded habitat.

Feeding guilds

Among feeding guilds (Fig. 3), insectivores had the highest species richness. The omnivores

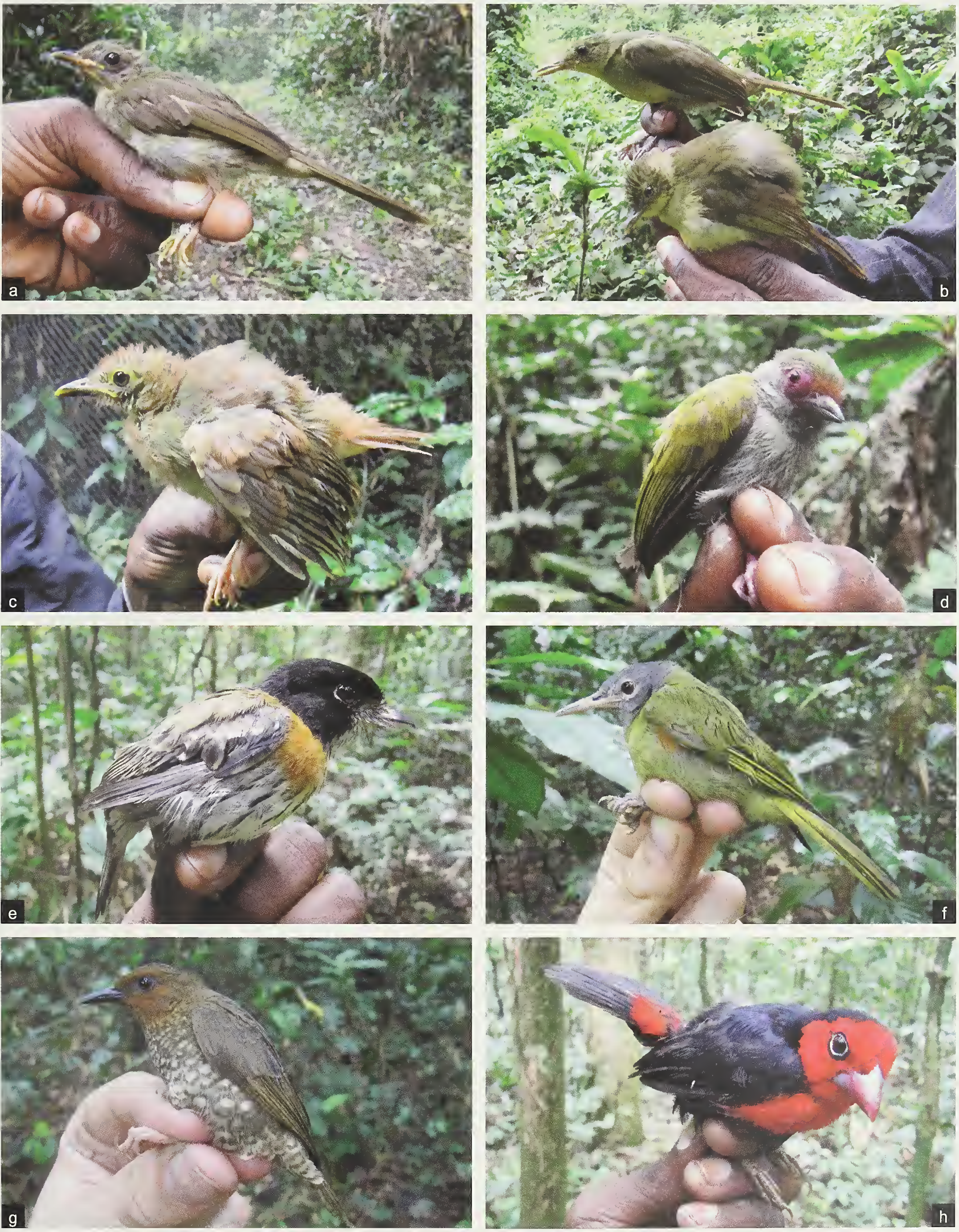

Figure 2. Forest-dependent species in Yangambi Biosphere Reserve, DR Congo, September 2012: (**a**) Yellow-whiskered Greenbul / Bulbul à moustaches jaunes *Andropadus latirostris*; (**b**) Icterine Greenbul / Bulbul ictérin *Phyllastrephus icterinus* (in foreground) and Xavier's Greenbul / Bulbul de Xavier *Phyllastrephus xavieri*; (**c**) Juvenile Red-tailed Bristlebill / Bulbul moustac *Bleda syndactylus*; (**d**) Male African Piculet / Picumne de Verreaux *Sasia africana*; (**e**) Male Rufous-sided Broadbill / Eurylaime à flancs roux *Smithornis rufolateralis*; (**f**) Male Grey-headed Sunbird / Souimanga à tête grise *Deleornis axillaris*; (**g**) Female Jameson's Antpecker / Parmoptile de Jameson *Parmoptila jamesoni*; (**h**) Male Grant's Bluebill / Sénégali à bec bleu *Spermophaga poliogenys* (Stijn Cooleman)

comprised a similar but slightly lower proportion of relative abundance, with only five species (especially Yellow-whiskered Greenbul, the most frequently captured species). All four nectarivores were sunbirds (Nectariniidae), which have a mixed diet of nectar, fruits or berries and insects. The three major avian feeding guilds—i.e. insectivores, omnivores and nectarivores—were represented in all habitat types, potentially providing important ecosystem services.

Of the remaining species, only granivores (with six species, including Columbidae and the majority of the waxbills Estrildidae) were represented in all habitat types. The carnivores (two *Accipiter* species) and the only obligate frugivore (Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus bilineatus*) were captured only in forest sites and TZ, respectively.

Variations in feeding guilds' capture rates appear between the main habitats (Fig. 3). The relative abundance of insectivores declined markedly with forest degradation: it was much higher in OGF (0.777 birds/100 mnh or nearly half of all captures within OGF) than in RGF (0.594 birds/100 mnh or *c*.40% of all captures within RGF) or TZ (0.227 birds/100 mnh or *c*.19% of all captures within TZ). Capture rates of the four partially insectivorous Nectariniidae also declined, although less markedly, whilst those of the omnivores and granivores increased.

Discussion

Our study indicates that abundances of several dominant groups are affected by forest modification and land use, especially for bulbuls, biome-restricted species, forest specialists and insectivores. In line with most avian functional diversity studies in tropical forests (*cf.* Sekercioğlu 2012), insectivores comprise the majority in old-growth forest and less frequently in degraded or fragmented habitat. Forest generalists and omnivores showed opposite patterns and were more abundant in disturbed forest habitat. Such shifts involved substitutions within different functional groups and consequently similar total capture rates in old-growth and regrowth forest. Yet, the total capture rate per habitat appeared to decrease slightly with forest disturbance, as did the diversity indices (except the Shannon-Wiener index, which was marginally higher in regrowth forest).

Disturbance-sensitive groups were also dominant overall. Irrespective of habitat, insectivores comprised the greatest number of species among feeding guilds, whilst omnivores were represented by distinctly fewer species. However, overall abundances of insectivores and omnivores were similar. Thus, if guild species numbers alter, their relative abundances do not necessarily change equally (*cf.* Sekercioğlu 2012). With respect to forest-dependence classes, forest specialists had a markedly higher species richness and a slightly higher capture rate than generalists.

Comparisons among tropical forest avifaunas

Overall capture rate at Y-MAB was lower than in Ituri Forest (Plumptre 1997), Kibale National Park (Dranzoa 1998) and Budongo Forest Reserve (Ngabo & Dranzoa 2001, Owiunji 2001). In some of these forests, the capture rate of forest specialists was considerably higher than that of generalists (Dranzoa 1998, Ngabo & Dranzoa 2001). In contrast, Farwig *et al.* (2008) registered a higher proportion of generalist captures, but a higher species richness of forest specialists in Kenya's Kakamega Forest. As in other Afrotropical studies (*cf.* Waltert *et al.* 2005), the most dominant family was the Pycnonotidae. Their high capture rates may in part be explained by the social structure of the abundant Yellow-whiskered Greenbul possibly behaving as a lek species (Brosset 1982, 1990), their varied diet (Bapeamoni 2014) and their ability to occupy various ecological niches (Keith *et al.* 1992, Upoki 2001).

Biome-restricted species comprised the majority of captured species and were negatively correlated with the gradient of land-use intensity, as in Cameroon (Waltert *et al.* 2005).

Generally, our greater total capture rate in intact forest matches findings in Uganda (Ngabo & Dranzoa 2001), in contrast to the slightly higher capture success in secondary versus primary forest in Ituri (Plumptre 1997). Clearly contrary results were recovered by Dranzoa (1998) and Catry *et al.* (1999), who mist-netted an obviously higher proportion of avifauna in secondary forest (where more birds fly at net height) than in primary forest. As understorey birds are more readily captured in mist-nets (Woog *et al.* 2010), we estimate that their relative abundance declines with forest degradation, being highest in mature forest.

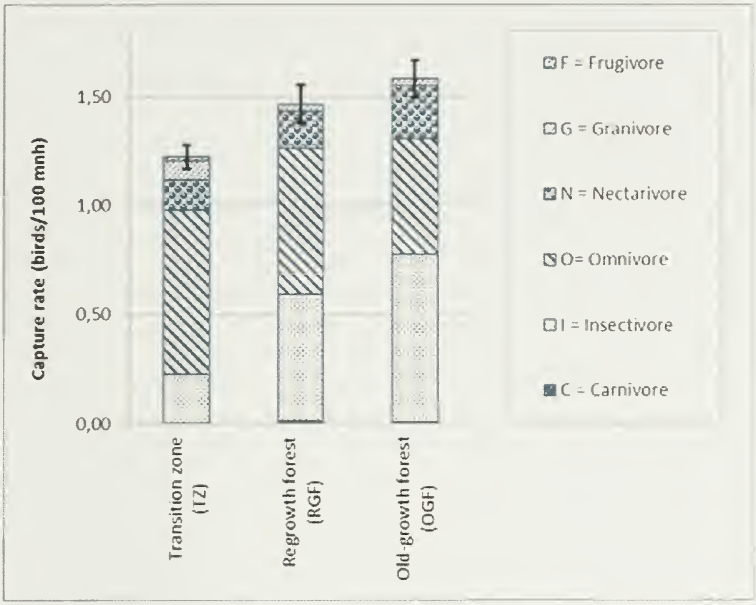

Figure 3. Relative abundance as capture rate (number of birds per 100 metre-net-hour) per feeding guild in each habitat. Error flags are applicable on the whole length of the plotted bars (calculated as mean values of the Shannon-Wiener indices of the sites within each main habitat type).

L'abondance relative exprimée par le taux de capture (nombre d'oiseaux par 100 mètre-filet-heure) par type de régime alimentaire et par type d'habitat. Des drapeaux d'erreur sont applicables sur toute la longueur des barres tracées (calculés comme des valeurs moyennes des indices de Shannon-Wiener des sites dans chaque principal type d'habitat).

Between old-growth forest subtypes, their relative abundance seems to decline with undergrowth density, but other vegetation structure parameters or distance to forest edge might influence this trend too.

Several studies have found that birds follow the expected gradient, with the most and least species-rich assemblages occurring in mature forests and degraded forest habitats, respectively (e.g. Thiollay 1995 *in* Waltert *et al.* 2005, Plumptre 1997, Lawton *et al.* 1998 *in* Waltert *et al.* 2005, Farwig *et al.* 2008), while others have uncovered opposite patterns (Dranzoa 1998, Catry *et al.* 1999, Fjeldså 1999, Dranzoa 2001, Sekercioğlu 2002). Yet, our species richness results must be interpreted with caution, due to the uneven capture intensity between the different main habitats: 28 species captured in regrowth forest in fewer than 10,000 mnh compared to 32 species in old-growth forest in more than 20,000 mnh. Although the species-time-area relationship almost always decreases, the species richness in regrowth forest should be higher in cases of similar capture rates.

Our diversity indices are probably somewhat biased by circumstances, notably the fact that some species were captured only once or twice, such as the forest specialist Yellow-browed Camaroptera *Camaroptera superciliaris* in degraded habitat alone. Some supposedly common generalists, such as Little Greenbul *Andropadus virens*, were rarely captured (possibly due to their relatively low capture rates in degraded habitats). Moreover, the Shannon-Wiener index demonstrated that both forest habitat types supported more avian diversity than the transition zone. The slightly higher Shannon-Wiener index for regrowth forest than for old-growth forest might reflect the greater habitat heterogeneity between regrowth forest sites (comprising fallow and young regrowth forest) than between old-growth forest sites. This comparison on a local scale within habitat clusters has also been considered by other studies (including Dranzoa 1998, Ngabo & Dranzoa 2001), proving that disturbance, including treefall gaps in vegetation, generates greater habitat heterogeneity. The combination of closed, reduced and open canopy, and increased open habitat in regrowth forest, permits a high abundance of forest visitors and generalists to occur, together with some forest specialists, as found by other studies (e.g. Sekercioğlu 2002).

Differences in relative abundance and diversity indices between both forest habitat clusters appear largely due to the substitution of some typical forest specialists (e.g. African Dwarf Kingfisher, Rufous-sided Broadbill and Jameson's Antpecker) in old-growth forest by more generalist species (such as Tambourine Dove *Turtur tympanistria*, Speckled Tinkerbird

Pogoniulus scolopaceus, Fraser's Forest Flycatcher *Fraseria ocreata* and Olive-bellied Sunbird *Cinnyris chloropygius*) or open-habitat species (e.g. Blue-spotted Wood Dove *Turtur afer* and Tawny-flanked Prinia *Prinia subflava*) in regrowth forest (*cf.* Lawton *et al.* 1998 *in* Waltert *et al.* 2005).

Different responses of bird groups

We found, like Sekercioğlu (2002), that forest specialists decline and generalists increase with forest degradation. Moreover, forest specialists were less abundant than generalists only in degraded habitat (including regrowth forest), as was true in a Kenyan study (Farwig *et al.* 2008). In contrast, forest specialists were (slightly) more abundant than generalists in logged or regenerating forests in Uganda (Dranzoa 1998, Naidoo 2004). These differences could be due to differences in methodology, or because the logged study area in Uganda was surrounded by more intact forest than most regrowth sites in Y-MAB. Furthermore, some unexpected captures were made in the transition zone, e.g. Xavier's Greenbul, a forest specialist. This mobile species moves freely from forest into open, degraded, logged or mixed-rural habitats, as evidenced elsewhere for many forest birds in general (Dranzoa 1995 *in* Sekercioğlu 2002, Naidoo 2004) and some old-growth sites in our study area were situated on the forest edge. On the other hand, several generalist and even a few open-habitat species were captured in old-growth forest (especially in *Gilbertiodendron* forest with a relatively sparse understorey).

Although our survey sites were situated in the reserve's buffer zone, the proportion of forest specialists was large, but we missed several more secretive and scarcer forest undergrowth species, such as Grey Ground Thrush *Zoothera princei*. Its occurrence is probably restricted to the core zone of the reserve. Given the heavy hunting pressure, Congo Peacock *Afropavo congensis* could be extirpated in Y-MAB (Toirambe *et al.* 2010). Because smaller birds are reportedly scarcely impacted by hunting (Sekercioğlu 2012), their functional shifts are mainly caused by land-use changes or deforestation. This is the case for the forest specialists, absent from degraded habitat (*cf.* Dranzoa 1998), especially insectivores.

Omnivores increase with forest modification (Owiunji & Plumptre 1998, Dale *et al.* 1999). They were rather common, especially Yellow-whiskered Greenbul. However, some studies have reported that omnivorous bird species richness does not differ between habitats (Waltert *et al.* 2005).

Just one other study known to us (Fjeldså 1999) has replicated our discovery of a slight reduction in numbers of small birds with mixed nectar/insect diet in disturbed zones. This contradicts other Afrotropical studies, in which nectarivores are more numerous in degraded forest (Plumptre 1997, Owiunji & Plumptre 1998, Dale *et al.* 1999, Owiunji 2001, Waltert *et al.* 2005, Newmark 2006), presumably because there are greater numbers of flowers in more open habitats. Our dataset may be too limited to detect significant shifts among the smaller feeding guilds.

The only capture of an obligate frugivore was in the transition zone. Other studies in Africa have also discovered that frugivorous birds are more numerous in disturbed areas (e.g. Plumptre 1997, Owiunji & Plumptre 1998, Fjeldså 1999, Owiunji 2001, Naidoo 2004), probably because of the greater abundance of fruiting plants. Elsewhere, frugivorous species richness did not differ between habitats (Waltert *et al.* 2005). Lehouck *et al.* (2009) found some frugivores to be more abundant in more mature forest sites.

The presence of more granivores in the open-habitat matrix reflects their foraging habits, and is similar to the findings of other tropical studies (Sekercioğlu *et al.* 2002, Waltert *et al.* 2005), especially due to the increased presence of grasses in open agricultural areas.

Overall, we can confirm that guild patterns in the central Congo Basin are largely similar to those elsewhere (Plumptre 1997, Waltert *et al.* 2005).

Conclusions

In our survey of the understorey avifauna in Y-MAB, certain forest-dependence classes showed pronounced differences in presence between habitats, as did certain feeding guilds. The similar relative abundances in both forest habitats (old-growth forest and regrowth forest) are due to the 'substitution' of functional groups, with forest specialists being replaced by generalists and insectivores by omnivores, as forest becomes more degraded. These changes result in less specialised bird communities with altered proportions among functional groups. Such shifts may affect ecosystem services despite the high species richness in disturbed forests. Our findings indicate that forest habitat deterioration threatens insectivores, as revealed by most other tropical studies. Doubtless, further land use (particularly agriculture) in the buffer zone of Y-MAB will diminish the forest surface. We suggest that the retention of a mosaic of old-growth forest patches should be considered, as a method of conservation management. It could help maintain resident forest bird populations and their related ecosystem services, particularly invertebrate pest control by insectivores.

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Appendix 1. Bird species recorded in the Yangambi Man and Biosphere Reserve, DR Congo, 5–24 September 2012.

Sequence and taxonomy follow Dowsett *et al.* (2014).

Biome: GCF = Restricted to the Guinea-Congo Forests biome (Fishpool & Evans 2001).

Forest-dependence (Bennun *et al.* 1996; *BoA*): FF = forest specialist, F = forest generalist, o = forest visitor or open-habitat species.

Feeding guilds (Waltert *et al.* 2005; *BoA*): F = Frugivore, G = Granivore, N = Nectarivore, O = Omnivore, I = Insectivore, C = Carnivore.

Numbers indicate capture rate (birds/100 mnh; 1 mnh = 1 metre-net-hour).

Annexe 1. Espèces d'oiseaux recensés dans la Réserve de biosphère de Yangambi, RD Congo, 5–24 septembre 2012.

L'ordre et la taxonomie suivent Dowsett *et al.* (2014).

Biome : GCF = Espèces confinées au biome de la forêt guinéo-congolaise (Fishpool & Evans (2001).

Dépendance de la forêt (Bennun *et al.* 1996 ; *BoA*) : FF = spécialiste forestier, F = généraliste forestier, o = visiteur forestier ou espèce d'habitat ouvert.

Guildes alimentaires (Waltert *et al.* 2005 ; *BoA*) : F = Frugivore, G = Granivore, N = Nectarivore, O = Omnivore, I = Insectivore, C = Carnivore.

Les nombres indiquent le taux de capture (oiseaux/100 mnh ; 1 mnh = 1 mètre-filet-heure).

		Biome	**Forest dependence**	**Feeding guild**	**Transition zone**	**Regrowth forest**	**Old growth forest**	**Overall**
ACCIPITRIDAE								
Red-chested Goshawk	*Accipiter toussenelii*		FF	C			0.004	0.003
Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk	*Accipiter castanilius*	GCF	FF	C		0.011		0.003
COLUMBIDAE								
Blue-headed Wood Dove	*Turtur brehmeri*	GCF	FF	G	0.017			0.003
Tambourine Dove	*Turtur tympanistria*		F	G		0.021		0.005
Blue-spotted Wood Dove	*Turtur afer*		*o*	G		0.011		0.003
CUCULIDAE								
Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo	*Cercococcyx olivinus*	GCF	FF	I		0.011		0.003
African Emerald Cuckoo	*Chrysococcyx cupreus*		F	I			0.004	0.003
ALCEDINIDAE								
African Dwarf Kingfisher	*Ceyx lecontei*	GCF	FF	I			0.017	0.010
African Pygmy Kingfisher	*Ceyx pictus*		*o*	I			0.004	0.003
CAPITONIDAE								
Speckled Tinkerbird	*Pogoniulus scolopaceus*	GCF	F	O	0.017	0.032		0.010
Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird	*Pogoniulus bilineatus*		F	F	0.017			0.003
PICIDAE								
African Piculet	*Sasia africana*	GCF	FF	I			0.004	0.003
Buff-spotted Woodpecker	*Campethera nivosa*	GCF	F	I		0.021	0.022	0.018
EURYLAIMIDAE								
Rufous-sided Broadbill	*Smithornis rufolateralis*	GCF	FF	I			0.009	0.005
PYCNONOTIDAE								
Little Greenbul	*Andropadus virens*		F	O	0.017	0.042	0.009	0.018
Yellow-whiskered Greenbul	*Andropadus latirostris*		F	O	0.628	0.573	0.501	0.538
	Andropadus latirostris / virens		F	O	0.017	0.021	0.017	0.018
Simple Greenbul	*Chlorocichla simplex*	GCF	F	O	0.035			0.005
Icterine Greenbul	*Phyllastrephus icterinus*	GCF	FF	I		0.085	0.263	0.180
Xavier's Greenbul	*Phyllastrephus xavieri*	GCF	FF	I	0.017	0.011	0.112	0.073
	Phyllastrephus icterinus / xavieri		FF	I			0.022	0.013
White-throated Greenbul	*Phyllastrephus albigularis*	GCF	FF	I		0.042		0.010
	Phyllastrephus sp. / *Illadopsis* sp.		FF	I	0.035	0.085	0.017	0.037
Red-tailed Bristlebill	*Bleda syndactylus*	GCF	FF	I			0.060	0.037
Red-tailed Greenbul	*Criniger calurus*	GCF	FF	I		0.011	0.009	0.008
Western Nicator	*Nicator chloris*	GCF	F	I		0.021		0.005
TURDIDAE								
Forest Robin	*Stiphrornis erythrothorax*	GCF	FF	I			0.004	0.003
Fire-crested Alethe	*Alethe diademata*	GCF	FF	I			0.035	0.021
Rufous Flycatcher Thrush	*Stizorhina fraseri*	GCF	FF	I		0.021	0.022	0.018
SYLVIIDAE								
Yellow Longbill	*Macrosphenus flavicans*	GCF	FF	I		0.011	0.004	0.005

		Biome	Forest dependence	Feeding guild	Transition zone	Regrowth forest	Old growth forest	Overall
Green Hylia	*Hylia prasina*	GCF	F	I	0.070	0.117	0.048	0.068
CISTICOLIDAE								
Tawny-flanked Prinia	*Prinia subflava*		*o*	I		0.011		0.003
Green-backed Camaroptera	*Camaroptera brachyura*		*o*	I	0.035	0.021	0.004	0.013
Yellow-browed Camaroptera	*Camaroptera superciliaris*	GCF	FF	I	0.017			0.003
MUSCICAPIDAE								
Fraser's Forest Flycatcher	*Fraseria ocreata*	GCF	F	I		0.011		0.003
Yellow-footed Flycatcher	*Muscicapa sethsmithi*	GCF	FF	I			0.009	0.005
Grey-throated Tit-Flycatcher	*Myioparus griseigularis*	GCF	FF	I	0.017			0.003
MONARCHIDAE								
(African?) Paradise Flycatcher	*Terpsiphone* (*viridis*)		*o*	I		0.021	0.022	0.018
Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher	*Terpsiphone rufiventer*	GCF	FF	I		0.011	0.022	0.016
PLATYSTEIRIDAE								
Chestnut Wattle-eye	*Dyaphorophyia castanea*	GCF	FF	I		0.042	0.030	0.029
TIMALIIDAE								
Pale-breasted Illadopsis	*Illadopsis rufipennis*		FF	I	0.017	0.011	0.004	0.008
Brown Illadopsis	*Illadopsis fulvescens*	GCF	FF	I	0.017	0.011		0.005
Scaly-breasted Illadopsis	*Illadopsis albipectus*	GCF	FF	I			0.013	0.008
	Illadopsis sp.		FF	I		0.011		0.003
NECTARINIIDAE								
Grey-headed Sunbird	*Deleornis axillaris*	GCF	FF	I			0.013	0.008
Blue-throated Brown Sunbird	*Cyanomitra cyanolaema*	GCF	FF	N		0.011	0.004	0.005
(Western Olive?) Sunbird	*Cyanomitra* (*obscura*)		FF	N	0.122	0.127	0.242	0.196
Collared Sunbird	*Hedydipna collaris*		F	N			0.004	0.003
Olive-bellied Sunbird	*Cinnyris chloropygius*		F	N		0.032		0.008
PLOCEIDAE								
Vieillot's Black Weaver	*Ploceus nigerrimus*	GCF	*o*	O	0.035			0.005
ESTRILDIDAE								
Chestnut-breasted Negrofinch	*Nigrita bicolor*	GCF	FF	I		0.011		0.003
Jameson's Antpecker	*Parmoptila jamesoni*	GCF	FF	I			0.004	0.003
Orange-cheeked Waxbill	*Estrilda melpoda*		*o*	G	0.017			0.003
Grant's Bluebill	*Spermophaga poliogenys*	GCF	FF	G			0.022	0.013
Western Bluebill	*Spermophaga haematina*	GCF	F	G	0.052		0.009	0.013
Total capture rates (birds/100 mnh) in metre-net-hour					1,205	1,475	1,589	1,504
Total number birds captured					69	139	368	576
Shannon-Wiener index					1.96	2.50	2.47	
Total numbers of species captured		35			17	28	32	51
Capture rate (birds/100 mnh)	FF				0.262	0.520	0.946	0.739
	F				0.855	0.891	0.613	0.718
	o				0.087	0.064	0.030	0.047

Observations of Rufous Fishing Owl *Scotopelia ussheri* in Sierra Leone

David Monticelli[a], *Alusein P. Koroma*[b] *and Denis Bannah*[c]

Observations de la Chouette-pêcheuse rousse *Scotopelia ussheri* en Sierra Leone. Les observations de la Chouette-pêcheuse rousse *Scotopelia ussheri* en Sierra Leone sont présentées de façon succincte, avec une attention particulière pour la Forêt de Gola et l'île de Tiwai, d'ou proviennent la majorité des données récentes. Douze contacts visuels ont été rapportés depuis 1989, tous suffisamment bien documentés pour éliminer la Chouette-pêcheuse de Pel *S. peli*, espèce étroitement apparentée qui se trouve dans la même zone. L'observation prolongée de deux adultes et un juvénile près de Tiwai en février 2014 ont permis la collecte de données concernant le comportement et l'écologie de cette espèce peu connue, ainsi que l'obtention de photos, qui sont présentées ici.

Summary. This paper summarises observations of Rufous Fishing Owl *Scotopelia ussheri* in Sierra Leone with an emphasis on Gola Forest and Tiwai Island, from where the majority of recent records emanates. Twelve visual encounters with the species have been reported since 1989, all of which were sufficiently well documented to eliminate the closely related Pel's Fishing Owl *S. peli*, which occurs in the same area. The protracted observation of two adults and a juvenile near Tiwai in February 2014 permitted the collection of behavioural / ecological data and photographs of this poorly known species, which are presented here.

Despite its recent down-listing from Endangered to Vulnerable, Rufous Fishing Owl *Scotopelia ussheri* is one of the rarest and least-known owls in the world, with a population estimated at no more than 10,000 individuals (BirdLife International 2014). The species is endemic to Upper Guinea forests and has a much more restricted range than its two congeners, Pel's *S. peli* and Vermiculated Fishing Owls *S. bouvieri* (Marks *et al.* 1999), with records from just five West African countries, including Sierra Leone, south-east Guinea, Liberia, Ivory Coast and south-west Ghana (see, e.g., Borrow & Demey 2001).

In Sierra Leone, no systematic census has been conducted to date, hence current knowledge of the species' distribution is based solely on a few local surveys and casual observations by visiting birders. Rufous Fishing Owls have been reported from at least three (protected) areas in the country: Loma Mountains Forest Reserve, Gola Rainforest National Park and Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary. Few records are available for the Loma Mountains, where it was first reported in 1992 (Atkinson *et al.* 1994) but just one possible record (in February 2008: Demey & Okoni-Williams 2008) since then. Most recent observations are from Gola and the nearby Tiwai Island area (including its smaller satellites), presumably due to the development of research and ecotourism activities in and around Gola Forest since 2006.

The first record of Rufous Fishing Owl for Gola Forest dates from 1989, when a captive juvenile was found in a village near its boundaries (Allport *et al.* 1989, Atkinson *et al.* 1994). Subsequently, at least 11 confirmed records have been made in the wild, six in Gola Forest, three at Tiwai, and two in unprotected areas adjacent to Gola, at Kwadi stream and the Moro River (see Table 1 for an overview). Within Gola, all of the records are from Mogbai, Makoi and Kwadi streams in Gola Central and Koadi stream in Gola South, while at Tiwai, on the Moa River, most sightings have been made on the small nearby islands of Tagati, Bati and Bunduti, rather than on Tiwai itself (note that the names of the Gola forest blocks have recently been changed: those areas previously known as Gola West and East are now Gola South, Gola North has become Gola Central, and Extension II is now Gola North). In all cases, the reported observations were sufficiently detailed to avoid confusion with Pel's Fishing Owl, which is also known to occur in this area (see e.g. Klop *et al.* 2010; this paper). Perhaps the most interesting record to date concerns the observation, in February 2014, of two adults and a juvenile / immature, near Tiwai Island. While most previous records in Sierra Leone involved brief sightings, the birds in February 2014 were observed for protracted periods on four different dates (including three consecutive days), thereby

Table 1. Sightings of Rufous Fishing Owls *Scotopelia ussheri* in and around Gola Rainforest National Park and Tiwai Island.

Tableau 1. Observations de la Chouette-pêcheuse rousse *Scotopelia ussheri* au Parc national de Gola et à l'île de Tiwai et leurs environs.

* = GPS data available / données GPS disponibles

Date	Sighting	Locality	Observer(s)	Source
12 Feb 1989	captive juvenile (photographed)	Madina; caught by villager several days previously in clump of bamboo at stream through nearby cocoa / coffee plantation, slightly outside Gola Central	G. Allport, P. Robertson	Allport *et al.* (1989); see also Fig. 5 in Atkinson *et al.* (1994)
28 Nov 2006	adult roosting at dusk in bamboo	Mogbai stream close to Konella, Gola Central *	G. Shorrock, F. Hunter	G. Shorrock & F. Hunter *in litt.* (2006)
8 Dec 2006	adult roosting and flying by midday	Mogbai stream 2.5 km upstream of Konella, Gola Central *	G. Anderson, E. Klop	Anderson *et al.* (2007), Wotton *et al.* (2010)
4 and 6 Feb 2007	adult seen at dusk	Kwadi stream near Tunkia Nema, Gola South *	F. Dowsett-Lemaire, R. J. Dowsett	Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett (2008)
12 Mar 2007	adult roosting by day in small tree 5 m above riverbed	Makoi River, Gola Central *	E. Klop, M. Kanneh	Klop *et al.* (2008)
14–15 Mar 2007	pair heard duetting at night and found roosting the following day in a large bamboo stand	Kwadi stream near Kwadima, slightly outside Gola Central *	E. Klop, A. M. Siaka	Klop *et al.* (2008), Klop *et al.* (2010)
10 Mar 2008	adult flushed from dense shrubbery in afternoon	Tiwai Island	R. Demey, A. M. Siaka	R. Demey *in Bull. ABC* 15: 275 (2008)
16 Jun 2009	adult photographed by camera-trap around midday	Tagati Island, near Tiwai, on Moa River *	A. Conway	Conway *et al.* (2010)
25 May 2011	adult seen	Moro River near Mogbaima / Mayengema, close to Liberian border and slightly outside Gola Central *	J. Lindsell	J. Lindsell *in litt.* (2011)
23 March 2012	adult seen	Mogbai stream close to Gola Malimbe camp, Gola Central *	E. Klop	E. Klop *in litt.* (2012)
24, 28, 31 Jan and 1 Feb 2013	adult seen flying on 24 Jan at night and heard at dusk/night on other dates	Mogbai stream close to Gola Malimbe camp, Gola Central *	S. Wotton, A. Schofield, R. Setchfield, F. Hawkins	Wotton *et al.* (2010); S. Wotton, A. Schofield, R. Setchfield, F. Hawkins *in litt.* (2013)
3 and 15–17 Feb 2014	adult seen in late afternoon on 3 Feb; adult with juvenile found roosting by day on 15–17 Feb	Bati and Bunduti Islands near Tiwai Island on the Moa River *	D. Monticelli, A. P. Koroma, D. Bannah, M. Woolf, M. MacRae	This paper

permitting the collection of behavioural/ecological data, and photographs, which are presented here.

Records in February 2014

As part of a short trip to Gola Forest in January–February 2014, DM visited Tiwai twice, on 1–3 and 15–17 February, during which time extensive, albeit opportunistic, searches for fishing owls were conducted together with APK & DB. Based on published information (Conway *et al.* 2009) and the knowledge of local fishermen, we concentrated our searches on the small islands west of Tiwai Island (Tagati, Bati, etc.), where the Moa River flows through a network of narrow, shallow and slow-flowing channels, usually fringed by stands of Raffia Palms *Raphia vinifera*. Our standard procedure was to carefully inspect the riparian vegetation from a small dugout canoe along a pre-established circuit among the network of channels, usually between *c.*06.00–10.00 hrs and *c.*17.00–20.00 hrs.

The first encounter occurred on 3 February at 17.45 hrs, when APK & DB noticed a medium-sized owl perched on a boulder in the middle of the stream, 20–25 m ahead of the boat. The bird was initially near the water level, but it almost immediately flew to perch on a nearby Raffia Palm at the edge of Bati Island. Before flying further inland, it remained in view for 1–2 minutes, permitting us to positively identify it as an adult Rufous Fishing Owl and to take photographs (Fig. 1). Subsequent attempts to relocate the bird that evening were unsuccessful, but en route to Tiwai Island, DM spotted a second owl flying overhead above the Moa River. This observation was made in poor light, as night had almost

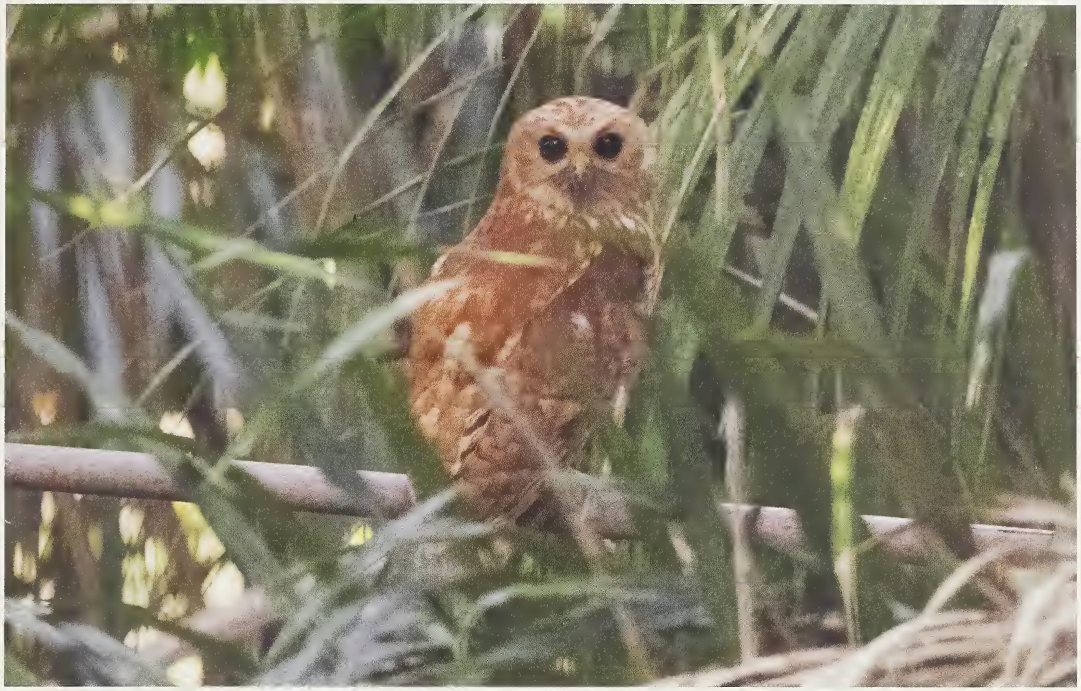


Figure 1. Adult Rufous Fishing Owl *Scotopelia ussheri* on a Raffia Palm *Raphia vinifera*, Bati Island, Sierra Leone, 3 February 2014 (David Monticelli)

Chouette-pêcheuse rousse *Scotopelia ussheri* adulte sur un Palmier raffia *Raphia vinifera*, île de Bati, Sierra Leone, 3 février 2014 (David Monticelli)

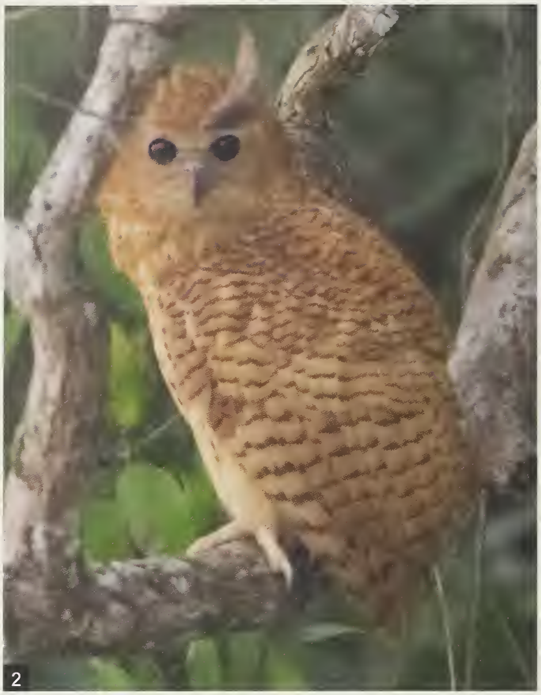
completely fallen, but the first impression was that of a very large owl—probably Pel's Fishing Owl. A few minutes later, DB relocated it with his spotlight on Tiwai Island, *c.*200 m from where we had previously found the adult Rufous Fishing Owl. The bird—an adult Pel's Fishing Owl—was perched on a tree *c.*6–8 m above the water, where it was in view for *c.*1 minute before flying away (Fig. 2).

Tiwai and its surrounding islands were re-visited two weeks later. On 15 February at 10.00 hrs, while we were slowly canoeing around Bunduti Island, an owl was spotted on a Raffia Palm overhanging the river. The bird was partially hidden by vegetation, but as it flew away the views were sufficient to identify it as an adult Rufous Fishing Owl. Five minutes later, APK relocated it further inland on a branch *c.*10–12 m above ground (Figs. 3–4). To our amazement, there were two owls perched together in the same tree. They remained in view for at least 15 minutes, permitting careful examination at close range and a series of photographs. Based on differences in size, shape and plumage coloration, we concluded that the second bird was a juvenile (Fig. 5). That evening and during the remaining two days in the area, we returned several times to the same spot, where we again found both birds and took additional photographs on 15th at 18.15 hrs and 17th at 09.15 hrs. The photographs revealed subtle differences in plumage details between the adult Rufous Fishing Owl observed on nearby Bati Island and that on Bunduti, indicating that they were different individuals.

Description

Size and shape

General impression on first encounter with an adult Rufous Fishing Owl is of a medium-sized owl, at least 20% larger than Barn Owl *Tyto alba.* The young Rufous Fishing Owl photographed on Bunduti (Fig. 5) was substantially smaller than the adult (i.e. similar in size to Barn Owl). When both were seen side by side, the young bird not only appeared shorter but also stubbier. In all cases,



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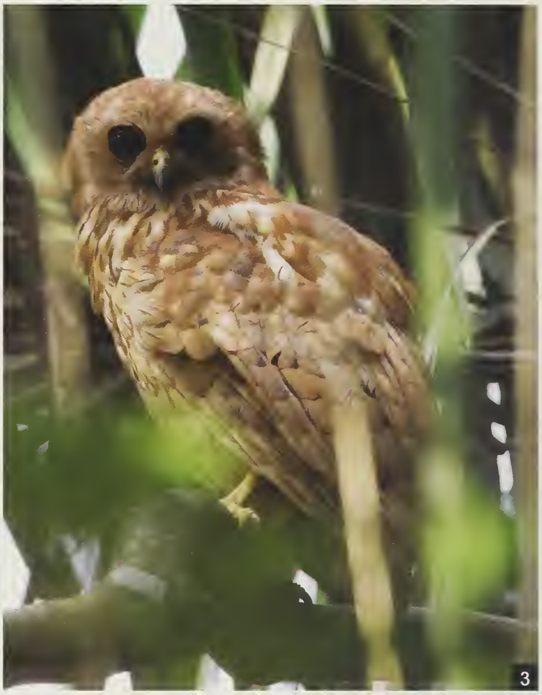

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Figure 2. Adult Pel's Fishing Owl *Scotopelia peli*, Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary, Sierra Leone, 3 February 2014 (David Monticelli)

Chouette-pêcheuse de Pel *Scotopelia peli* adulte, Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary, Sierra Leone, 3 février 2014 (David Monticelli)

Figure 3 . Adult Rufous Fishing Owl *Scotopelia ussheri*, Bunduti Island, Sierra Leone, 17 February 2014 (David Monticelli)

Chouette-pêcheuse rousse *Scotopelia ussheri* adulte, île de Bunduti, Sierra Leone, 17 février 2014 (David Monticelli)

size alone was almost sufficient to distinguish this species from the much larger Pel's Fishing Owl (Fig. 2).

Plumage

Important differences in plumage coloration and barring permit the rather straightforward separation of Pel's and Rufous Fishing Owls in the field (Figs. 2–3). Pel's is entirely tawny-rufous with fine dusky bars on the mantle, scapulars, wing-coverts, remiges and tail. The bars are dark brown, except on the primaries, where they are more blackish and slightly broader. Adult Rufous Fishing Owl also has barred remiges and rectrices but, unlike Pel's, the upperparts (mantle, scapulars and wing-coverts) are plain and less uniformly coloured, showing a mixture of rufous, creamy-buff and white. A few blackish marks are noticeable on the mantle. In both species, the underparts (breast, belly and flanks) are finely streaked (i.e. most feathers have a dark shaft) and slightly paler than the upperparts. In Pel's Fishing Owl, some dark-shafted feathers also show a well-defined blackish chevron-like mark over their distal part, especially on the flanks (barely visible on Fig. 2), while in Rufous the blackish chevrons are replaced by a paler and more diffuse rufous patch (Fig. 4).

Bare parts

While Pel's Fishing Owl has an all-grey bill and cere (Fig. 2), Rufous Fishing Owl's bill is bluish grey contrasting with a yellowish cere (Fig. 4). The unfeathered tarsus and toes of Rufous Fishing Owl are yellowish-orange in both the adult and the juvenile.

Ageing

Apart from its smaller size, the juvenile / immature Rufous Fishing Owl appeared bulkier

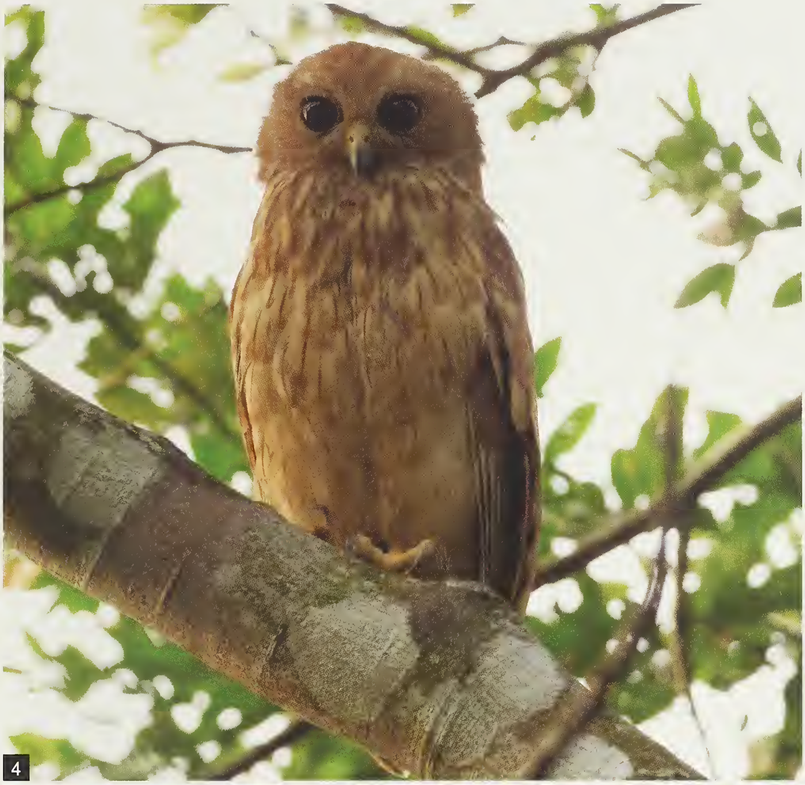
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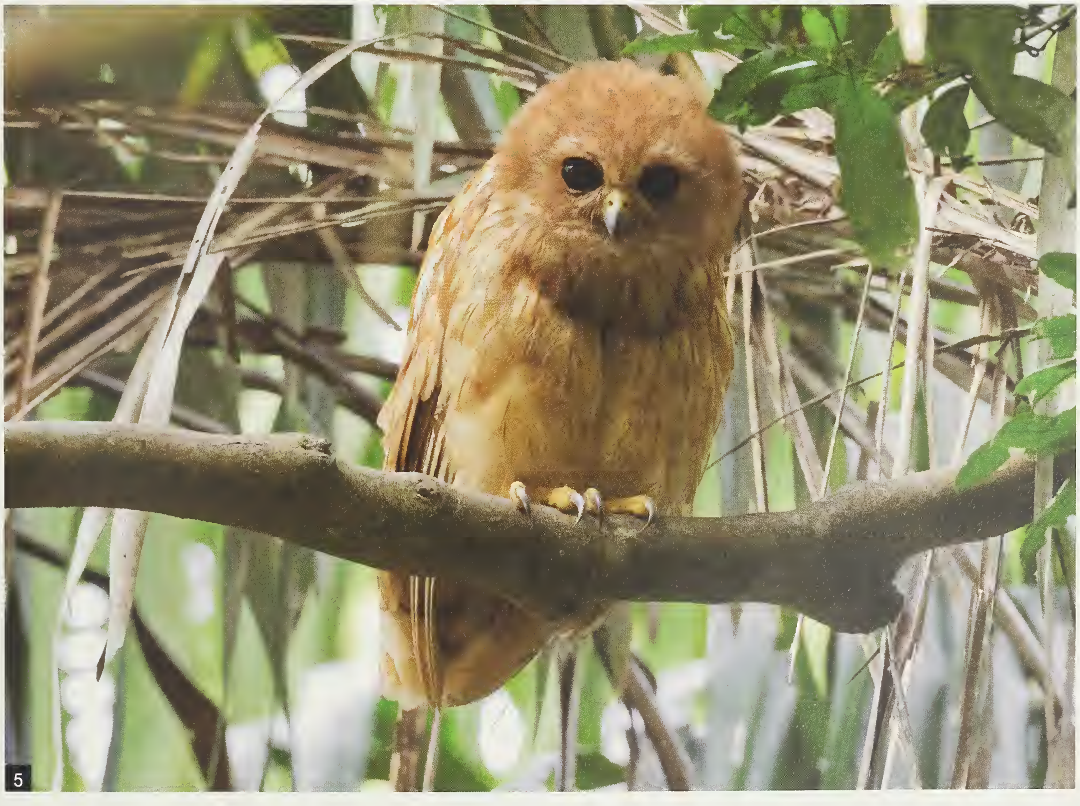
Figure 4. Adult Rufous Fishing Owl *Scotopelia ussheri*, Bunduti Island, Sierra Leone, 17 February 2014 (David Monticelli)

Chouette-pêcheuse rousse *Scotopelia ussheri* adulte, île de Bunduti, Sierra Leone, 17 février 2014 (David Monticelli)

Figure 5. Juvenile Rufous Fishing Owl *Scotopelia ussheri*, Bunduti Island, Sierra Leone, 15 February 2014 (David Monticelli)

Chouette-pêcheuse rousse *Scotopelia ussheri* juvénile, île de Bunduti, Sierra Leone, 15 février 2014 (David Monticelli)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than its parent, presumably due to its dense fluffy feathering. Overall it was also slightly paler than the adult, especially on the underparts (Fig. 5). Close examination of the photographs revealed loosely textured head and body feathers, indicative of first-generation feathers. Twice the young bird was seen in flight, when it could be seen to possess virtually the same wing pattern as the adult, i.e. rufous wings uniformly barred dusky. If eggs are laid in September–October, as suggested in the literature (Marks *et al.* 1999), this bird was probably 4–5 months old.

Voice

During our daytime observations, the owls were silent and no attempt was made to solicit a vocal response using playback. No systematic searches were conducted at night, though we heard a distant call on 3 February at *c.*23.00 hrs. The call, a dove-like 'ooo' repeated at regular intervals of *c.*15–20 seconds for at least one hour, was clearly different from that of Pel's Fishing Owl on Chappuis (2000).

Behaviour

The generally accepted view that African fishing owls possess strictly nocturnal habits has recently been challenged by a few reported cases of individuals foraging diurnally (see Conway *et al.* 2010, and references therein). We believe that our late-afternoon observation on 3 February of an adult on a rocky outcrop almost certainly concerned an active individual, although foraging was not witnessed. The same spot was re-visited on several occasions on 15–17 February, but no owls were seen. In contrast, the adult and juvenile observed on Bunduti Island were re-sighted in the same area on several occasions. Each time the birds were perched fairly high in the trees, which suggests that this was a favoured daytime roost. Our presence did not seem to disturb the birds, as they remained on the same branch until we left; in particular, the juvenile seemed rather tame and unaffected by photography, which lasted for *c.*1 hour on 15th.

Habitat

The Pel's and Rufous Fishing Owls we observed were sufficiently close to each other (<750 m apart) to suggest that the species breed sympatrically at Tiwai. Previous observations at Gola have suggested that the two species may possess different habitat and dietary preferences (Klop *et al.* 2010). For example, Rufous Fishing Owl has been mainly observed along small streams, where it is suspected to feed on small fish and crabs, whereas Pel's Fishing Owl favours deeper and wider rivers. This matches our observations, as Pel's Fishing Owl was observed along a very wide and deep portion of the Moa River, whereas Rufous Fishing Owls were encountered along shallower and narrower stretches. In addition, Bati and Bunduti Islands are located within secondary forest close to Kambama village, suggesting that Rufous Fishing Owl is not confined to primary forest (*cf.* Allport *et al.* 1989).

Acknowledgements

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Are Yellow-throated Seedeater *Crithagra flavigula* and White-throated Seedeater *C. xanthopygia* conspecific? Observations of seedeaters from Djibouti

Michael S. L. Mills and Callan Cohen

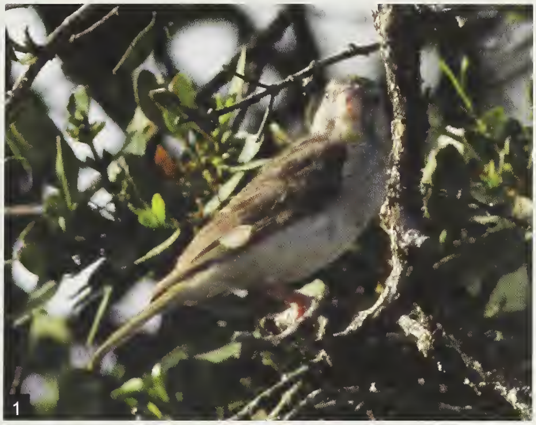
Le Serin à gorge jaune *Crithagra flavigula* et le Serin à croupion jaune *C. xanthopygia* sont-ils conspécifiques? Observations concernant des serins de Djibouti. Des serins *Crithagra* sp. observés dans la Forêt du Day, Djibouti, en juin 2010, étaient identifiés initialement comme des Serins à gorge jaune *C. flavigula*. Les variations dans le plumage de cette espèce et du Serin à croupion jaune *C. xanthopygia* et les ressemblances de plumage et des vocalisations entre le Serin à gorge jaune et le Serin à croupion jaune ont cependant jeté le doute sur leur identité, et remettent en question la validité de ces deux espèces, dont un examen approfondi pourrait révéler la conspécificité. Auparavant, le Serin de Reichenow *C. reichenowi* était le seul *Crithagra* sp. rapporté de Djibouti, mais cette espèce devrait maintenant être confirmée. Quelle que soit l'identité des serins de la Forêt du Day, ils représentent une nouvelle espèce pour Djibouti.

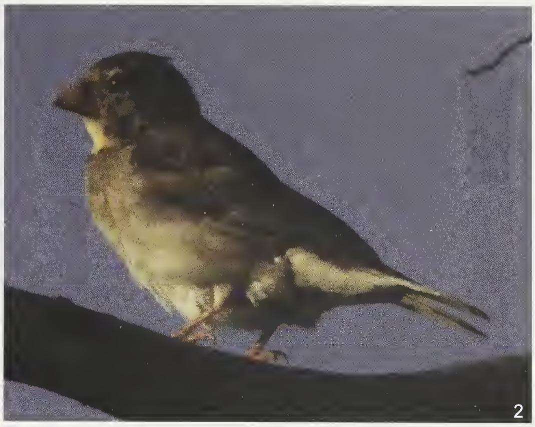
Summary. Seedeaters *Crithagra* sp. observed at Forêt du Day, Djibouti, in June 2010, were initially identified as Yellow-throated Seedeater *C. flavigula*. However, plumage variation within and plumage and vocal similarities between Yellow-throated Seedeater and White-throated Seedeater *C. xanthopygia* have cast doubt on their identity, and call into question the validity of these two species, which further study may reveal to be conspecific. Previously, Reichenow's Seedeater *C. reichenowi* was the only *Crithagra* sp. reported from Djibouti, but that species should now be regarded as requiring confirmation and whatever the identity of the seedeaters at Forêt du Day, they represent a new species for Djibouti.

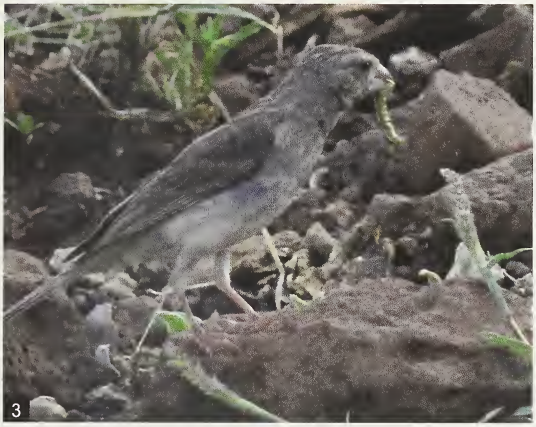
In the late afternoon of 1 June 2010, we were observing birds on the western edge of Forêt du Day, Djibouti, at 11°46'14"N 42°39'07"E (1,465 m), *c.*1.5 km south-east of Day village (11°47'N 42°38'E). The habitat was open juniper forest with a grassy understorey, and shrubby juniper forest on steep slopes. Several seedeaters *Crithagra* sp. (previously placed in the genus *Serinus*) were heard singing from atop *Juniperus procera* trees and were initially observed at >50 m. Based on their yellow rumps they were assumed to be Reichenow's Seedeater *C. reichenowi*, the only species of *Crithagra* previously reported from the area (Welch & Welch 1984). However, closer inspection revealed that they had white chins, throats with a very faint yellow wash, and lacked the dark streaking over the breast characteristic of Reichenow's Seedeater (Fig. 1). The birds also had relatively plain upperparts, a greyish wash to the upper breast, and a yellow rump that extended to the uppertail-coverts and was thus more extensive than in Reichenow's Seedeater (Figs. 2–3). These features suggested their identity to be Yellow-throated Seedeater *C. flavigula* (Atkins & Harvey 1996, Redman *et al.* 2009), which was our initial identification.

During the next two hours and on the following morning, we observed at least 20 adult seedeaters in the area, many of them singing. They moved in pairs and small flocks, and all possessed the same features described above. The yellow wash on the throat, especially visible on its lower part, was difficult to see on some individuals and did not appear obvious on our photographs, but when the birds were examined closely there was no doubt as to its presence. Such faintness of the yellow does not eliminate Yellow-throated Seedeater: Atkins & Harvey (1996) noted that the yellow can sometimes be difficult to see on Yellow-throated Seedeater and our own subsequent field observations from Melka Ghebdu (April 2012, February 2013, April 2013, April 2014) in Ethiopia revealed a wide range of intensity of yellow throat markings, from barely visible to very distinct.

Several individuals were photographed singing from treetop perches and feeding on the ground, and sound-recordings were made of their vocalisations, especially the song. These were compared aurally to recordings of Yellow-throated Seedeater made at Melka Ghebdu in Ethiopia, to which they sounded identical. Recordings of







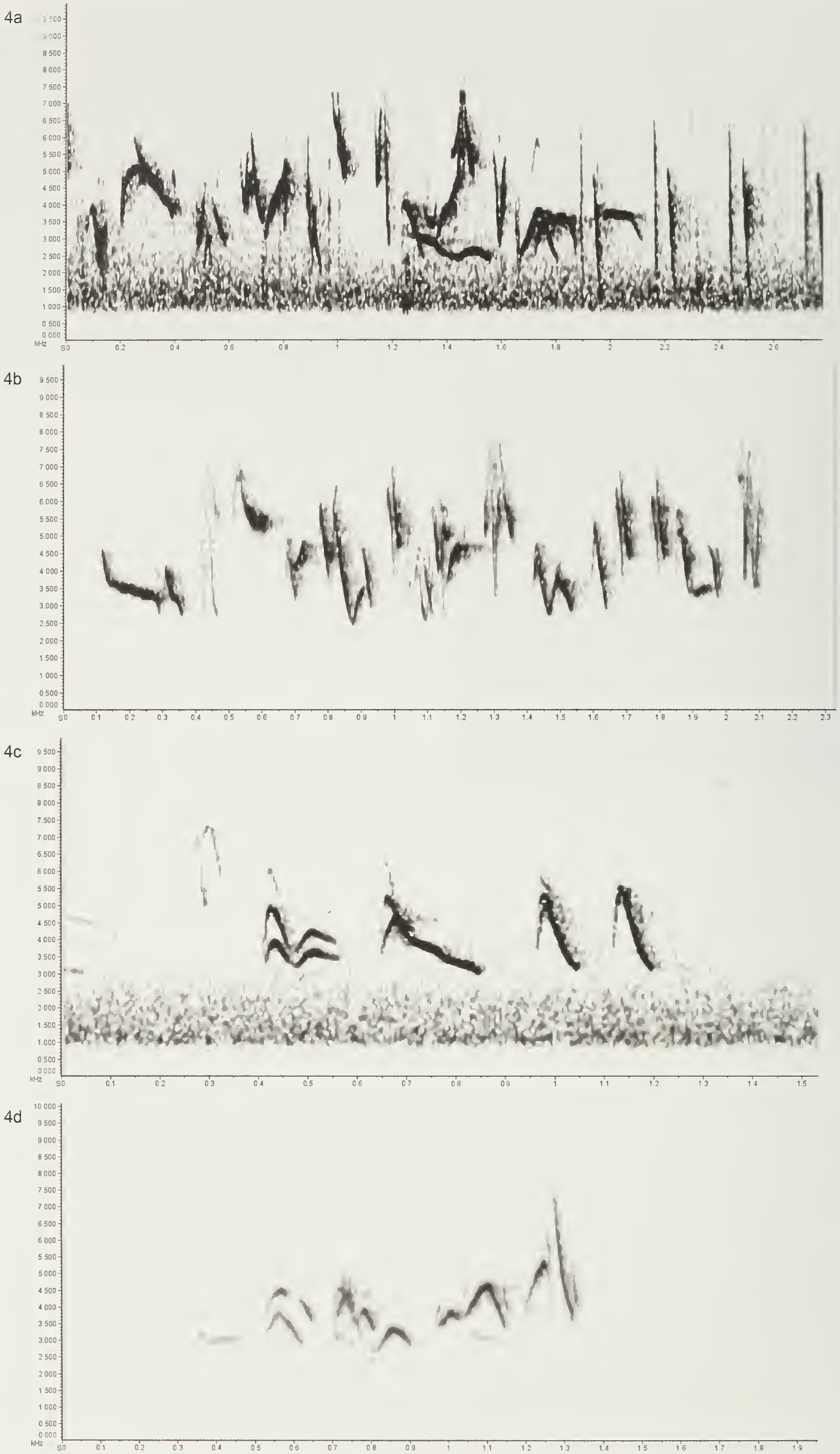
Figures 1–3. Adult *Crithagra* seedeaters, Forêt du Day, Djibouti, 1–2 June 2010; the white chin, yellow throat, unstreaked breast, relatively plain upperparts and extensive yellow rump are all visible (Callan Cohen & Michael Mills / www.birdingafrica.com)

Serins *Crithagra* adultes, Forêt du Day, Djibouti, 1–2 juin 2010 ; le menton blanc, la gorge jaune, la poitrine non striée, les parties supérieures unies et le croupion jaune sont tous visibles (Callan Cohen & Michael Mills / www.birdingafrica.com)

White-throated Seedeater *C. xanthopygia* (also confusingly called Yellow-rumped Seedeater, a name sometimes applied to Reichenow's Seedeater) made subsequently in Ethiopia sound different, although may not represent birds in full song, so might not be directly comparable to our recordings of the Djibouti birds. Four of these recordings, demonstrating the similarities and differences, can be downloaded at www.birdsangola.org/downloads.htm. In order to further demonstrate the observed similarity between the song of the seedeaters in Forêt du Day and those of Yellow-throated Seedeater from Melka Ghebdu, and differences from White-throated Seedeater recorded at Gibé Gorge and the Jemma Valley, we present sonograms of these recordings created using Raven Lite (Figs. 4a–d).

In addition, a single presumed juvenile that was with the adults was photographed. It lacked the yellow throat and had very heavy dark brown markings on the throat and breast (Fig. 5). Superficially it recalled Reichenow's Seedeater, although the malar stripe was much broader, the throat dark, and the supercilium faint and confined to a pale line just above the eye. The identity of this juvenile is uncertain; its association with the other seedeaters suggests it was of the same species, but M. Ottaviani (*in litt.* 2010) believes the heavy streaking indicates Reichenow's Seedeater.

Subsequently to our visit to Djibouti, N. Borrow visited Forêt du Day in September 2010 and reported White-throated Seedeater *C. xanthopygia* here (N. Borrow *in litt.* 2010). Some discussion followed, and photographs by M. Ottaviani suggested that, contrary to the available literature (Fry & Keith 2004, Redman *et al.* 2009), White-throated Seedeater can show some yellow on the throat and that almost all Yellow-throated Seedeaters have much more extensive yellow on the throat than shown by the Djibouti birds, with the yellow occasionally reaching onto the breast (M. Ottaviani *in litt.* 2010). Subsequently, in February 2011 CC was able to study, photograph and record the vocalisations of White-throated Seedeater in the Jemma Valley, Ethiopia, a locality within the known range of that species (Ash & Atkins 2009). His photographs revealed that


4a
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Figures 4 a–d. Sonograms of seedeater songs for comparison, with time(s) on the x-axis and frequency (kHz) on the y-axis. Sonograms are based on recordings of **(a)** Yellow-throated Seedeater *Crithagra flavigula* made by Michael Mills at Melka Ghebdu, Ethiopia, April 2014, **(b)** a seedeater *Crithagra* recorded by Michael Mills at Forêt du Day, Djibouti, June 2010, **(c)** White-throated Seedeater *C. xanthopygia* recorded by Michael Mills at Gibé Gorge, Ethiopia, April 2014, and **(d)** White-throated Seedeater recorded by Callan Cohen at the Jemma Valley, Ethiopia, February 2011. The song structure of Yellow-throated Seedeater and the Forêt du Day seedeaters is almost identical, but quite different from that observed in White-throated, although recordings of the latter may not represent full song and therefore not be directly comparable. The recordings used to create these sonograms can be downloaded at www.birdsangola.org/downloads.htm.

Sonogrammes de chants de serins pour comparaison, avec le temps sur l'axe x et la fréquence (kHz) sur l'axe y. Les sonogrammes sont basés sur les enregistrements suivants : **(a)** Serin à gorge jaune *Crithagra flavigula* enregistré par Michael Mills à Melka Ghebdu, Éthiopie, en avril 2014 ; **(b)** un serin *Crithagra* enregistré par Michael Mills à la Forêt du Day, Djibouti, en juin 2010 ; **(c)** Serin à croupion jaune *C. xanthopygia* enregistré par Michael Mills à Gibé Gorge, Éthiopie, en avril 2014 ; et **(d)** Serin à croupion jaune enregistré par Callan Cohen dans la vallée de Jemma, Éthiopie, en février 2011. La structure du chant du Serin à gorge jaune et celle des serins de la Forêt du Day est presque identique, mais bien différente de celle du Serin à croupion jaune, bien que les enregistrements de ce dernier peuvent ne pas représenter le chant complet et ne sont donc pas directement comparables. Les enregistrements utilisés pour produire ces sonogrammes peuvent être téléchargés sur www.birdsangola.org/downloads.htm.

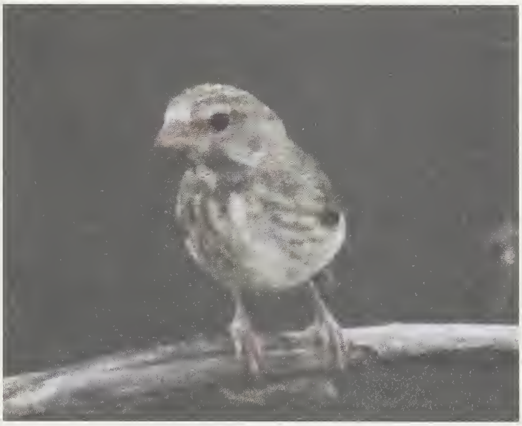


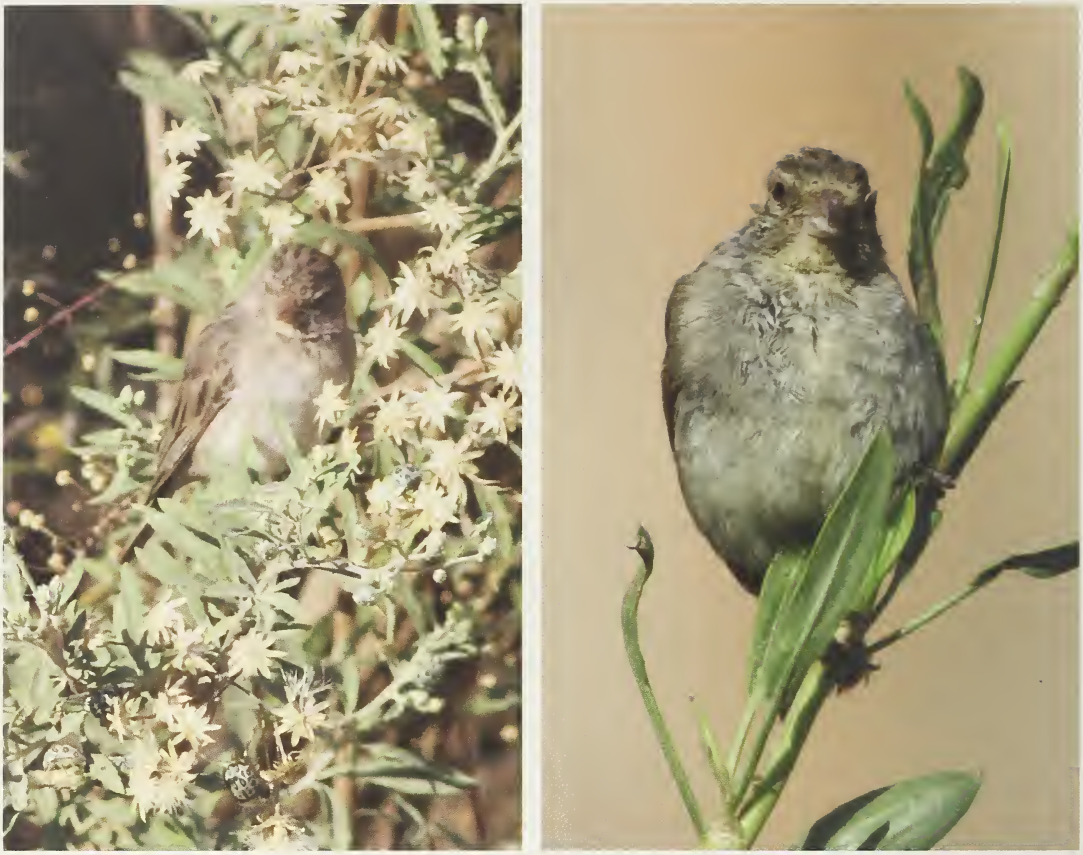
Figure 5. Presumed juvenile *Crithagra*, observed with the adults depicted in Figs. 1–3, Forêt du Day, Djibouti, 1 June 2010; the plumage is superficially similar to that of Reichenow's Seedeater *C. reichenowi*, but differs in having a dark throat, broader malar stripe and fainter supercilium (Callan Cohen & Michael Mills / www.birdingafrica.com)

Crithagra, présumé juvénile, observé avec les adultes des Figs. 1–3, Forêt du Day, Djibouti, 1er juin 2010 ; le plumage est superficiellement similaire à celui du Serin de Reichenow *C. reichenowi*, mais en diffère par la gorge sombre, le trait malaire plus large et le sourcil plus faible (Callan Cohen & Michael Mills / www.birdingafrica.com)

a small amount of faint yellow was visible on the lower chins of all birds examined carefully (Figs. 6–7), like that displayed by the birds from Djibouti. In May 2013 MSLM examined the series of *c.*15 White-throated Seedeaters at the Natural History Museum, Tring, which showed no yellow on the throats of any of these specimens, although the colour could have faded.

In summary, the amount of yellow on the throat appears to be quite variable in both White-throated Seedeater (from none to a small amount) and Yellow-throated Seedeater (from almost invisible to clearly demarcated bright yellow spilling onto the breast). There may be a seasonal/plumage wear component to this variation, although individual variation is known for some congeners (G. M. Kirwan *in litt.* 2015). The songs of these two taxa are also very similar, if not identical, and they frequent similar habitats and have abutting distributions. No other distinguishing characteristics have been documented in the literature during direct comparison of the two taxa, suggesting that these forms may be conspecific. It is our opinion that it is currently impossible to assign the Djibouti birds to one taxon or the other, and that furthermore the validity and taxonomic rank of the two taxa discussed require renewed investigation, preferably including a genetic comparison, and if proven to be different, their diagnostic features demand elucidation.

At present, White-throated Seedeater is known to occur widely throughout the western highlands of northern Ethiopia and Eritrea (Ash & Atkins 2009). Yellow-throated Seedeater, however, is poorly known and confined to altitudes of 1,300–1,600 m in Shoa province, central-east Ethiopia, although it is suspected to be more widespread (Fry & Keith 2004, Ash & Atkins 2009, Redman *et al.* 2009) with unpublished reports from



Figures 6–7. Adult White-throated Seedeaters *Crithagra xanthopygia*, Jemma Valley, Ethiopia, February 2011; a small patch of faint yellow is visible on the lower throat, a feature not mentioned in the literature (Callan Cohen / www.birdingafrica.com)

Serins à croupion jaune *Crithagra xanthopygia* adultes, vallée de Jemma, Éthiopie, février 2011 ; une petite tache jaune est à peine visible sur le bas de la gorge, une caractéristique qui n'est pas mentionnée dans la littérature (Callan Cohen / www.birdingafrica.com)

up to 350 km north of Melka Ghebdu (M. Gabremichael *in litt.* 2010). Interestingly, the distributions of these two taxa abut in Ethiopia, with records from the same atlas square (Ash & Atkins 2009). Reichenow's Seedeater also occurs widely in Ethiopia, at similar altitudes, but largely occurs to the south of the range of White-throated Seedeater. None of the three occurs close to the Djibouti border. Our sightings extend the known range of either species by at least 430 km and constitute a new species for the country. The presence of Reichenow's Seedeater in Djibouti now requires confirmation.

During our short visit to Forêt du Day, these seedeaters appeared to be locally common, while the observation of a presumed juvenile suggests that they breed there. On 2–3 June 2010, more *Crithagra* seedeaters were heard at Dittilou (11°46'52"N 42°41'36"E), on the south-eastern edge of Forêt du Day, although they were not seen, so we cannot be certain that they were not Reichenow's Seedeater. More recently, the same seedeaters were again seen in the Forêt du Day (N. J. Redman pers. comm.) and were identified as White-throated Seedeaters. Future visitors to Djibouti should pay close attention to seedeaters with yellow rumps, to confirm their range and status, and to establish whether any other species of *Crithagra* might occur in the country.

Acknowledgements

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Population expansion of Swee Waxbill *Coccopygia melanotis*, Red-billed Firefinch *Lagonosticta senegala* and Karoo Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas coryphoeus* in Lesotho?

Grzegorz Kopij

Expansion de la population de l'Astrild à joues noires *Coccopygia melanotis*, l'Amarante du Sénégal *Lagonosticta senegala* et l'Agrobate coryphée *Cercotrichas coryphoeus* au Lesotho? Des études sur le terrain faites en 1999–2002 montrent que la distribution et l'abondance de l'Astrild à joues noires *Coccopygia melanotis*, l'Amarante du Sénégal *Lagonosticta senegala* et l'Agrobate coryphée *Cercotrichas coryphoeus* au Lesotho diffèrent de ce qui est mentionné dans les ouvrages de référence et qu'il pourrait s'agir d'une expansion de la population de ces trois espèces.

The present status of several bird species in Lesotho appears to differ from that described in major works on the avifauna of the country (Jacot-Guillarmod 1963, Winterbottom 1964, Osborne & Tigar 1990, Bonde 1993) or in major handbooks on southern African birds (Harrison *et al.* 1997, Hockey *et al.* 2005). Here, I report the results of a study undertaken in Maseru district, in 1999–2002, on the distribution and abundance of three species: Swee Waxbill *Coccopygia melanotis*, Red-billed Firefinch *Lagonosticta senegala* and Karoo Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas coryphoeus*.

Swee Waxbill is endemic to southern Africa, occurring from Western Cape to KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo, South Africa, and in Lesotho and Swaziland, with isolated populations elsewhere (Nuttall 2005). Although generally common, it is considered rare over most of the Highveld, while in the Maloti area of Lesotho it is completely absent (Bates 1996, Barnard & Herremans 1997, Nuttall 2005). In the lowlands and foothills of Lesotho it is considered very rare (Bonde 1993, Bates 1996), with just four records during the first Southern African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP) study period (1987–92; Barnard & Herremans 1997). Red-billed Firefinch is fairly common in southern Africa (Nuttall 1997, Mills 2005), but is regarded as very rare in Lesotho, with only two records during the first SABAP (Osborne & Tigar 1990, Bonde 1993, Harrison 1997). Karoo Scrub Robin, another southern African endemic, is common from southern Namibia to Western Cape and southern Free State, but there are just two previous records in Lesotho, in the vicinity of Maseru (Osborne & Tigar 1990, Bonde 1993, Harrison 1997, Oatley 2005).

Study area and Methods

Observations were made during 1999–2002 throughout Lesotho, but were focused on Maseru district. All records were dated and localities identified on a 1:250,000 scale map, prepared by the Department of Land Surveys and Physical Planning, and published by the Lesotho Government in 1994.

Karoo Scrub Robin was counted using line transects (Bibby *et al.* 1992), in 1999–2001. Transects were conducted in the middle of the bushy vegetation belt on the slopes around plateaux (Kopij 2010, 2013). The number of pairs recorded was extrapolated across the entire vegetation belt to achieve the estimated total number of breeding pairs around a given plateau. Swee Waxbill and Red-billed Firefinch were recorded incidentally and opportunistically, either on transects around plateaux or sandstone cliffs, or elsewhere during other field work (Kopij 2001, 2006, 2010, 2013).

Maseru district covers 4,279 km^2, approximately 50% of which falls within the lowlands and foothills (below 2,200 m), between the Caledon River in the west and the Makhaleng River in the east. Lowlands and foothills lie entirely within the *Cymbopogon–Themeda* Grassveld, whilst the highlands (above 2,200 m) lie within the *Festuca–Themeda* Mountain Grassveld (Acocks 1987). Most of the lowlands and foothills have been converted to farmland, with indigenous bushy areas preserved on Clarens Formation sandstone cliffs (Fig. 1). The highlands are used mainly as pasture for cattle, sheep and goats in spring and summer (August–March).

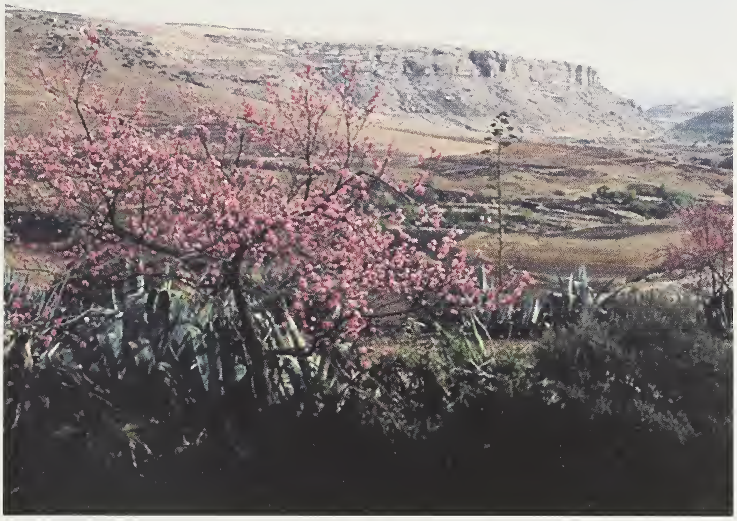

Figure 1. Typical farmland in the Lesotho lowlands (Ha Maama Valley, near Roma), with thickets in the foreground (habitat of Red-billed Firefinch *Lagonosticta senegala*) and sandstone cliffs in the background, with patches of bushy vegetation below the cliffs (habitat of Swee Waxbill *Coccopygia melanotis*) (D. Ambrose)

Terres cultivées typiques dans les plaines du Lesotho (Ha Maama Valley, près de Roma), avec des fourrés au premier plan (habitat de l'Amarante du Sénégal *Lagonosticta senegala*) et en arrière-plan des falaises de grès, au bas desquelles se trouve, par endroits, la végétation arbustive qui constitue l'habitat de l'Astrild à joues noires *Coccopygia melanotis* (D. Ambrose)

Table 1. Records of Swee Waxbill *Coccopygia melanotis* and Red-billed Firefinch *Lagonosticta senegala* in the Maseru District, Lesotho, in 1999–2002. Key: m – male; f – female; ad – adult; juv – juvenile; bp – breeding pair.

Tableau 1. Observations de l'Astrild à joues noires *Coccopygia melanotis* et l'Amarante du Sénégal *Lagonosticta senegala* dans le district de Maseru, Lesotho, en 1999–2002. Clé : m – mâle ; f – femelle ; ad – adulte ; juv – juvénile ; bp – couple nicheur.

Locality	Coordinates	Numbers	Date
Swee Waxbill			
Between St. Bernard and Setibing	29°28'S 27°52'E	m+f+3juv	28.01.2000
Ha Maama Valley	29°28'S 27°43'E	1 ad	16.09.2000
Ha Lebekeng, near Roma	29°25'S 27°44'E	2 families	13.07.2001
Ha Lebela, near Sefikeng	29°28'S 27°43'E	1 bird	24.10.2001
Between Thaba-Bosiu and Ha Mosala	29°22'S 27°47'E	8 birds	16.08.2001
Ha Matibe, near St. Joseph	29°33'S 27°36'E	family	14.12.2001
Makulele, near Koro Koro	29°31'S 27°37'E	1 bird	14.12.2001
Between Koro Koro and Moitšupeli	29°33'S 27°43'E	8 birds	01.08.2001
On Thupa-Kubu River, near Ha Senekane	29°16'S 27°44'E	5 birds	01.09.2001
Near Nazareth	29°23'S 27°47'E	family	05.01.2002
Liphiring Gorge, near Ha Baroana	29°21'S 27°47'E	2 families	18.08.2001
Mohlaka-oa-tuka Gorge below Ha Ntsi	29°22'S 27°46'E	2 ad	05.01.2002
Between Matsieng and Morija	29°40'S 27°33'E	family	08.06.2001
Masite Plateau	29°36'S 27°27'E	female	11.05.2000
Mokiki-Ha Shale, near Roma	29°28'S 27°46'E	1 bp	1999–2000
Red-billed Firefinch			
Phutiatsana River	29°21'S 27°45'E	4 birds	05.01.2002
Thupa-Kubu River	29°18'S 27°44'E	3 birds	01.09.2001
Mohlaka-oa-tuka Gorge below Ha Ntsi	29°23'S 27°47'E	1 bird	05.01.2002
Makulele, near Koro Koro	29°31'S 27°37'E	1 bird	14.12.2001
Sandstone cliff north of Roma	29°25'S 27°44'E	1–2 bp	1999–2000
Koro-Koro area	29°32'S 27°37'E	1 bird	14.12.2001
Ha Maama Valley	29°28'S 27°43'E	1 bird	16.09.2000
Pae-la-itlhatsoa, near Roma	29°27'S 27°45'E	1–2 bp	1999–2000

Results

For Swee Waxbill, 15–17 breeding pairs were recorded at 15 sites (Table 1). Being rather elusive, the real number probably exceeds 50 pairs. Swee Waxbills prefer bushy vegetation on the slopes below sandstone cliffs of the Clarens Formation and around plateaux in the lowlands (Fig. 1), a habitat not listed by Nuttall (2005). Vegetation is dominated by Nana Berry *Rhus dentata*, Broom Karee *R. erosa*, Common Taaibos *R. pyroides*, Blue Guarri *Euclea crispa*, Cape Myrtle *Myrsine africana* and Dogwood *Rhamnus prinoides*. Other species include *Buddleja salviifolia*, *Cussonia paniculata*, *Rhus burchellii*, *R. lancea*, *R. divericata*, *R. erosa*, *Grewia occidentalis*, *Olea europea*, *Celtis africana* and *Heteromorpha trifolium* (Talukdar 1995) and several exotic shrub species, e.g. *Nicotiane glauca*, *Rosa eglanteria*, *Acacia dealbata* and *Populus canescens* (Ambrose *et al.* 2000).

Red-billed Firefinch was found at eight sites, with a total of 8–10 pairs (Table 1). The population in Maseru district is estimated at 30–60 pairs. Most occurred in lowland thickets, usually close to farmland and rivers (Fig. 1). The thickets comprised either indigenous vegetation or Australian Black Wattle *Acacia dealbata* in some eroded areas. Red-billed Firefinch appears to be most numerous along the Phutiatsana River and the lower reaches of its tributaries.

Karoo Scrub Robin was found to be a subdominant (2–4.9% of all birds recorded) or dominant (>5%) species in avian assemblages

Table 2. Population size of Karoo Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas coryphoeus* in bushy vegetation around plateaux in Lesotho in 1999–2001.

Tableau 2. Population de l'Agrobate coryphée *Cercotrichas coryphoeus* dans la végétation arbustive autour des plateaux du Lesotho en 1999–2001.

Plateau	Coordinates	Year	No. of pairs		Source
			recorded	estimated	
Masite	29°36'S 27°27'E	2000	35	30–50	Kopij (2006)
Makhoarane	29°38'S 27°33'E	1999–2001	21	25–30	Kopij (2006)
Qeme	29°28'S 27°26'E	1999–2000	19	20–40	Kopij (2010)
Qoatseneng	29°19'S 27°29'E	2000–2001	6	4–7	Kopij (2010)
Qhomane	29°35'S 27°36'E	2000	6	7–10	Kopij (2013)
Berea	29°17'S 27°38'E	2001	4	10–20	Kopij (2013)
Leribe	28°07'S 29°05'E	2001	0	0	Kopij (2013)
Total			**81**	**96–157**	

associated with bushy vegetation at the base of sandstone cliffs around plateaux in Maseru district, including within the city of Maseru (Kopij 2010). All plateaux inhabited by Karoo Scrub Robins are in the lowlands. Remarkably, Karoo Scrub Robin is restricted to this habitat, around plateaux. It was not found in the same vegetation along sandstone cliffs beyond the plateaux, e.g. between Roma and Matsieng or between Makhalanyane and Roma (pers. obs.). In total, 96–157 pairs were recorded, and the population in Maseru district is estimated at 140–180 pairs; population density is estimated at 7–10 pairs / 100 km^2.

Discussion

The increase of Red-billed Firefinch in Lesotho can be attributed to the introduction of trees and shrubs in farmland, with the recent invasion by Black Wattle along some stream valleys (Ambrose *et al.* 2000) potentially important in this respect. Red-billed Firefinch was usually recorded alone (50%) or in pairs (25%) (Table 1). Elsewhere in southern Africa, e.g. in the Zambezi Region, it is usually encountered in larger groups (Mills 2005; pers. obs.).

The apparent increase by Swee Waxbill might to some extent be attributed to an increase in observer activity in its habitat, especially in 1999–2002. Being rather elusive and strictly associated with bushy vegetation, it could easily have been overlooked in the past.

This is unlikely to have been the case for Karoo Scrub Robin, as it is quite conspicuous. This species has probably expanded its range from the eastern Free State into the southern Lesotho lowlands in recent years.

Studies conducted in Maseru district in 1999–2002 present a different picture of the distribution and abundance of the three selected species opposed to previous work. The status of several other passerines in Lesotho may merit further investigation, as these might also differ from the literature.

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First records for Guinea-Bissau of Vitelline Masked Weaver *Ploceus vitellinus* and its nesting association with a paper wasp

João L. Guilherme and Piet Wit

Primeiros registos de tecelão-mascarado-vitelino para a Guiné-Bissau, e da sua nidificação em associação com uma vespa-do-papel. Relatamos os primeiros registos de tecelão-mascarado-vitelino *Ploceus vitellinus* para a Guiné-Bissau. As observações tiveram lugar no sector do Boé, no sudeste do país. Foram observados vários indivíduos e ninhos activos, quer isolados como em pequenas colónias de nidificação, confirmando-se o estatuto da espécie como reprodutor. Apresentamos também as primeiras evidências de nidificação deste tecelão em associação com uma espécie de vespa-do-papel do género *Polistes* (Vespidae, Polistinae).

On 14 October 2013, PW found a nest of Vitelline Masked Weaver *Ploceus vitellinus* suspended from the spiny branches of an *Acacia* tree (Fig. 1), near Béli village (11°50'24"N 13°56'01"W), in the Boé, a remote region in south-east Guinea-Bissau. A photograph of an adult male, taken on 21 October 2013 (Fig. 2) shows the typical head pattern of narrow black mask, black bill, reddish iris and chestnut crown (Borrow & Demey 2001). The underparts and rump are bright yellow, there is much yellow on the wings and the legs are pinkish. The rather similar Heuglin's Masked Weaver *P. heuglini*, which also occurs in the region (Guilherme 2014), can be excluded, as breeding males have a pale iris and a black mask reaching the central breast (Borrow & Demey 2001), and the nest shape is different, as Vitelline has a unique arrangement with grasses running parallel from the bottom entrance to the top without crossing each other (Collias & Collias 1984). This is the first record of Vitelline Masked Weaver for Guinea-Bissau (*cf.* Dodman *et al.* 2004). The species is common in savanna from West Africa to Kenya and Tanzania (Fry & Keith 2004). It is known from neighbouring Senegambia and Mali, but had not been recorded from Guinea-Bissau (Dowsett *et al.* 2013a–d).

Nesting association with a paper wasp

During a roadside survey of *c.*40 km from Béli to Tchétche (11°55'41"N 14°12'53"W), five trees with Vitelline Masked Weaver nests were found in October 2013. Furthermore, four trees with nests were identified during expeditions to the area in September and December 2014.

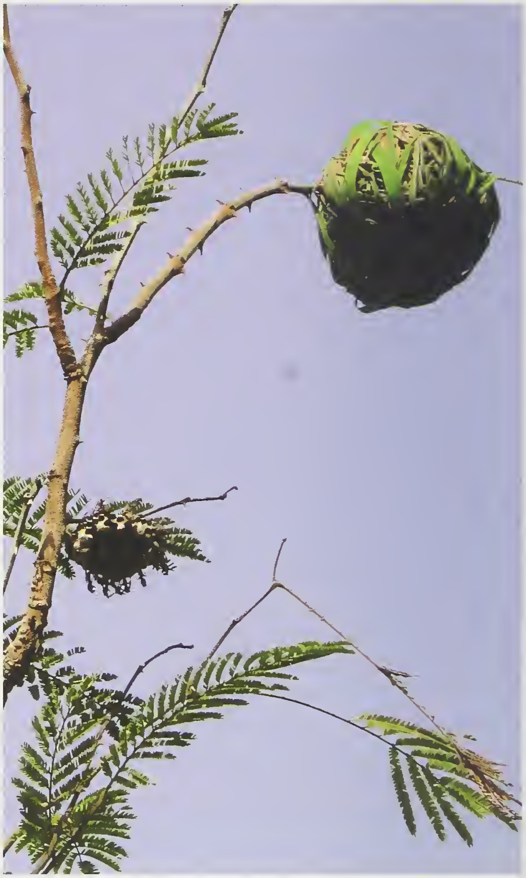
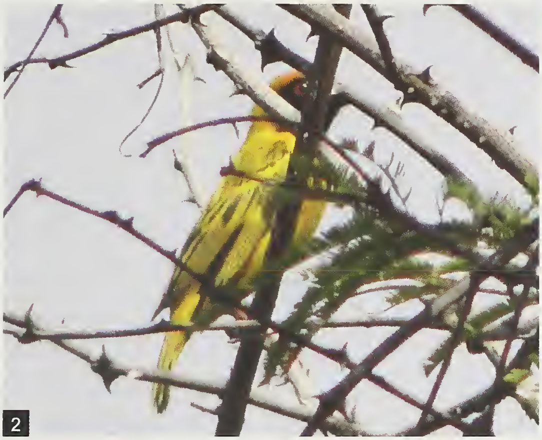
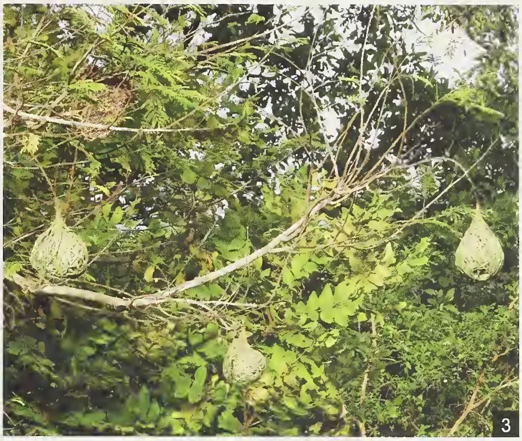


Figure 1. Nest of Vitelline Masked Weaver *Ploceus vitellinus* suspended from an *Acacia macrothysta* tree, with a paper wasp nest nearby, Boé, Guinea-Bissau, October 2013 (Piet Wit)

Figura 1. Ninho de tecelão-vitelino-mascarado *Ploceus vitellinus* pendurado numa Acácia (*Acacia macrothysta*) na proximidade de um ninho de vespa-do-papel, Boé, Guiné-Bissau, outubro de 2013 (Piet Wit)





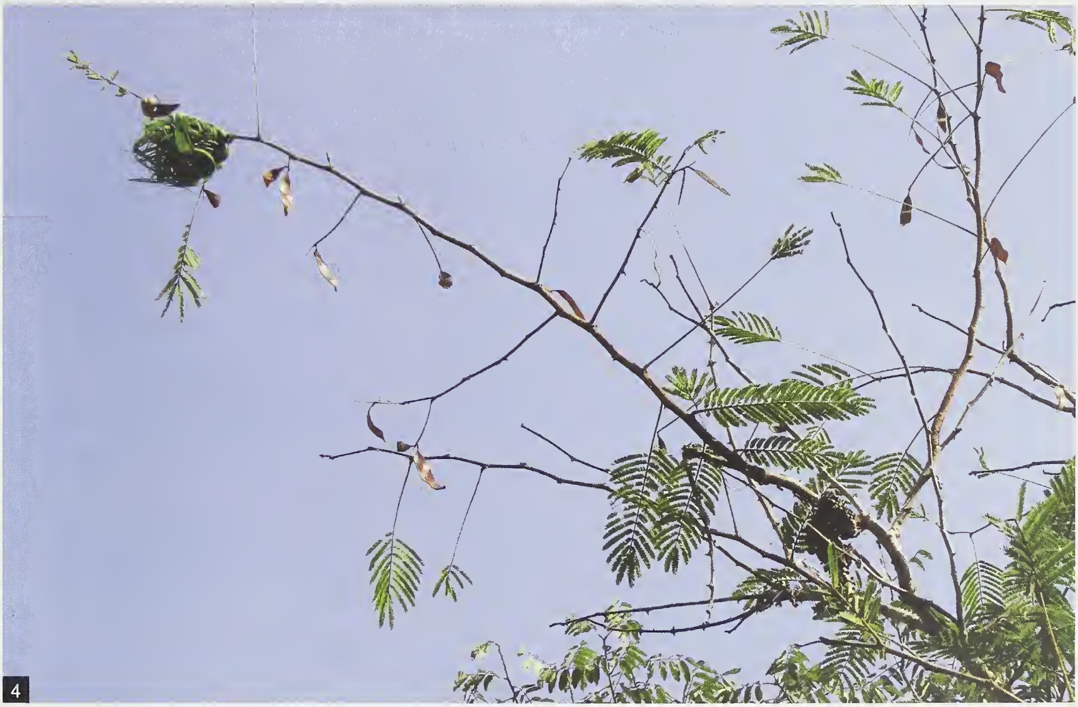


Figure 2. Adult male Vitelline Masked Weaver *Ploceus vitellinus* in full breeding plumage, Boé, Guinea-Bissau, 20 October 2013 (Piet Wit)

Figura 2. Tecelão-vitelino-mascarado *Ploceus vitellinus* macho adulto em plumagem nupcial, Boé, Guiné-Bissau, 20 de outubro de 2013 (Piet Wit)

Figure 3. Small colony of three nests of Vitelline Masked Weaver *Ploceus vitellinus*, with a paper wasp nest nearby, Boé, Guinea-Bissau, October 2013 (Piet Wit)

Figura 3. Pequena colónia composta por três ninhos de tecelão-vitelino-mascarado *Ploceus vitellinus*, na proximidade de um ninho de vespa-do-papel, Boé, Guiné-Bissau, outubro de 2013 (Piet Wit)

Figure 4. Nest of Vitelline Masked Weaver *Ploceus vitellinus* under construction, with an active paper wasp nest nearby, Boé, Guinea-Bissau, September 2014 (Piet Wit)

Figura 4. Ninho de tecelão-vitelino-mascarado *Ploceus vitellinus* em construção, na proximidade um ninho activo de vespa-do-papel, Boé, Guiné-Bissau, setembro de 2014 (Piet Wit)

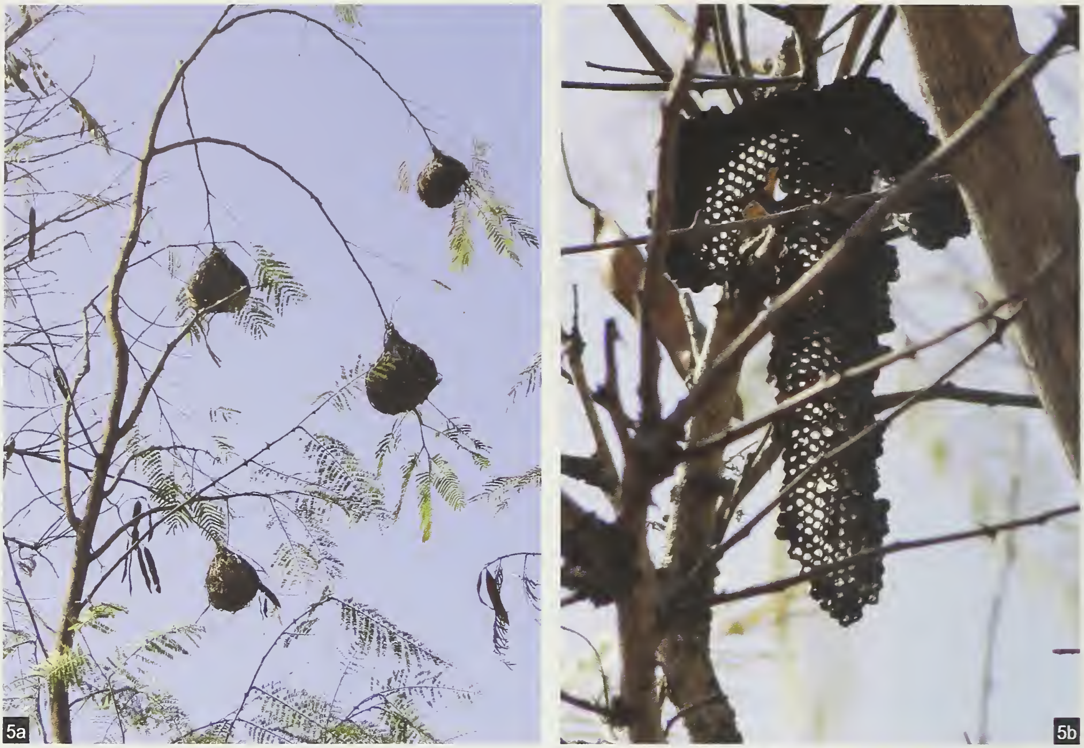


Figure 5. (**a**) Old decaying nests of Vitelline Masked Weaver *Ploceus vitellinus*; (**b**) abandoned paper wasp nest found nearby in the same *Acacia macrothysta*; Boé, Guinea-Bissau, December 2013 (Piet Wit)

Figura 5. (**a**) Ninhos abandonados de tecelão-vitelino-mascarado *Ploceus vitellinus*; (**b**) ninho de vespa-do-papel abandonado encontrado na mesma árvore (*Acacia macrothysta*), Boé, Guinea-Bissau, dezembro de 2014 (Piet Wit)

The nests were isolated (Fig. 1) or in small colonies of three (Fig. 3) up to five nests. The nests were all in *Acacia macrostachya*, which is a common species of tree in Sudan-Guinea savanna (Geerling 1987). Both isolated nests and colonies were associated with at least one nest of paper wasps (Vespidae, Polistinae), belonging to the genus *Polistes*, nearby on the same *Acacia* tree (Figs. 1, 3). The nests found in September were still under construction (Fig. 4), but in these cases wasp colonies were already present. In October nests were in use by Vitelline Masked Weavers (Fig. 3). In December the nests found were already decaying and in one case the wasp colony was already abandoned (Fig. 5).

The association of birds nests with social insects has been described for several species. The exact ecological meaning of these associations is not fully understood (Quinn & Ueta 2008). Some evidence suggests that birds benefit from protection by these aggressive or annoying insects (Haemig 2001) resulting in increased nesting success (Beier & Tungbani 2006). Earley (2013) lists 121 bird species associated with 28 wasps and three bees. Of these, 34 are African birds, almost all representatives of the Estrildidae, Nectariinidae and Ploceidae. Examples of such weaver–wasp associations in West Africa include Spectacled Weaver *P. ocularis* with the wasp *Polybioides tabidus* (Vespidae, Polistinae), reported from Cameroon (Dejean & Fotso 1995), and Heuglin's Masked Weaver with the wasp *Ropalidia cincta* (Vespidae, Polistinae) from Ghana (McCrae & Walsh 1974). Cheke & Walsh (1996) reported unoccupied nests of Vitelline Masked Weaver 'with attendant polistine wasp combs' in northern Togo. Here we have presented the first evidence of this association by breeding Vitelline Masked Weavers.

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Rare seabird sightings off north and west Madagascar, January–February 2014

Dominic P. Rollinson

Observations d'oiseaux de mer rares dans les eaux à l'ouest et au nord de Madagascar, janvier–février 2014. Plusieurs oiseaux de mer rares ont été observés dans les eaux à l'ouest et au nord de Madagascar en janvier–février 2014, parmi lesquels le deuxième et troisième Puffin de Baillon *Puffinus bailloni* pour le pays. Le Pétrel de Barau *Pterodroma baraui* a été noté une seule fois dans le sud-ouest, tandis que le Pétrel de Bulwer *Bulweria bulwerii* et le Pétrel de Jouanin *B. fallax* ont été rencontrés régulièrement – il y a peu de données de ces deux espèces de *Bulweria* pour la région malgache. Un Puffin à pieds pâles *Ardenna carneipes* a été observé au large du nord de Madagascar ; cette espèce est régulièrement notée plus au sud, mais il y a peu de données au nord. Un Océanite de Wilson *Oceanites oceanicus* et un Labbe pomarin *Stercorarius pomarinus* ont été observés dans les eaux au nord-ouest et au nord de Madagascar, respectivement – les deux espèces sont très rares au large de l'île. Treize autres oiseaux de mer ont été rencontrés, la plupart desquels sont notés fréquemment au large de Madagascar.

Summary. Several rare seabird species were recorded during a trip off northern and western Madagascar in January–February 2014, including the second and third Tropical Shearwaters *Puffinus bailloni* for the country. Barau's Petrel *Pterodroma baraui* was encountered once in the south-west, while Bulwer's *Bulweria bulwerii* and Jouanin's Petrels *B. fallax* were noted regularly—for either *Bulweria* species, very few records exist for the Madagascar region. A Flesh-footed Shearwater *Ardenna carneipes* was observed off northern Madagascar; this species is regularly recorded further south, with few records from the north. A Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* and a Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus* were observed off north-western and northern Madagascar, respectively—both are very rare offshore. Thirteen other seabirds were also encountered, most of which are frequently recorded off Madagascar.

Whilst working as a marine mammal observer on board the *MV Maria*, I opportunistically observed seabirds off the north and west coasts of Madagascar. The survey lasted 25 days, from 15 January to 8 February 2014, between the Madagascan ports of Tulear and Antsirianana (Fig. 1). Observations were made from the best forward-facing platform, mostly from the bow deck, but also from the bridge and bridge wing. A DSLR camera with a 300-mm lens was used to take photographs to aid identification.

Barau's Petrel *Pterodroma baraui*

One seen *c*.50 km north-east of Tulear (23°03'S 43°09'E; Fig. 1) was identified by its mainly white underwing with dark-tipped primaries and black carpal bar, together with its mostly dark grey/brown upperparts with darker outer flight feathers and inner coverts, forming an 'M' across the upperwings (Onley & Schofield 2007). The obviously darker cap was also noted. It did not fly in the typically active *Pterodroma* style, but had a slightly more lethargic flight action, occasionally rising higher above the ocean before dipping down again. There are only four previous Madagascan records, all of singles off Tolagnaro in October–January (Safford & Hawkins 2013).

Tropical Shearwater *Puffinus bailloni*

Singles were seen off north-western and northern Madagascar (Table 1). They were identified by their entirely dark brown/black upperparts, white underparts and mostly dusky underwings with broad, dark margins (Onley & Scofield 2007; Fig. 2). Flight action was characterised by rapid flapping, interspersed by fairly short glides, low above the ocean. Both individuals were dark-vented birds, typical of the northern subspecies *P. b. nicolae* / *temptator*. Although differentiation in the field of the two subspecies (of which *temptator* is considered by some authorities to belong to a separate species, Persian Shearwater *P. persicus*: *cf.* del Hoyo & Collar 2014) is difficult, both birds appeared to be *P. b. temptator* based on the very dark brown/black upperparts (*P. b. nicolae* has sooty-brown upperparts) and the duskier underwings (paler in *P. b. nicolae*). The closest known breeding population of *P. b.*

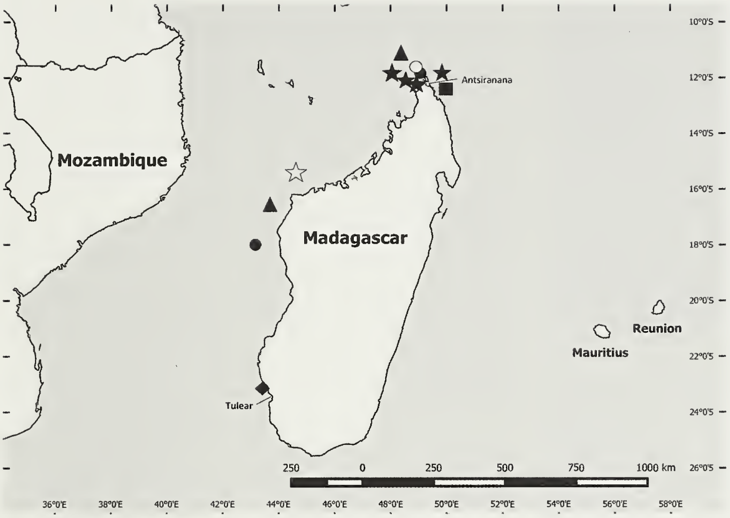

Figure 1. Sightings of rare seabirds off northern and western Madagascar, January–February 2014.

Observations d'oiseaux de mer rares dans les eaux au nord et à l'ouest de Madagascar, janvier–février 2014.

◆ = Barau's Petrel / Pétrel de Barau *Pterodroma baraui*; ▲ = Tropical Shearwater / Puffin de Baillon *Puffinus bailloni*; ■ = Flesh-footed Shearwater / Puffin à pieds pâles *Ardenna carneipes*; ● = Bulwer's Petrel / Pétrel de Bulwer *Bulweria bulwerii*; ★ = Jouanin's Petrel / Pétrel de Jouanin *B. fallax*; ☆ = Wilson's Storm-petrel / Océanite de Wilson *Oceanites oceanicus*; ○ = Pomarine Skua / Labbe pomarin *Stercorarius pomarinus*.

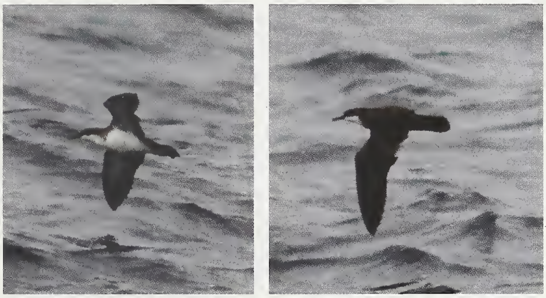

Figure 2. Tropical Shearwater *Puffinus bailloni*, off north-western Madagascar, 17 January 2014, showing the typically pale underparts, with dark margins to the underwings and dark vent, and black upperparts (Dominic P. Rollinson)

Puffin de Baillon *Puffinus bailloni*, dans les eaux au nord-ouest de Madagascar, 17 janvier 2014, montrant les parties inférieures typiquement pâles, avec le dessous des ailes au bord sombre et le bas-ventre sombre, et les parties supérieures noires (Dominic P. Rollinson)

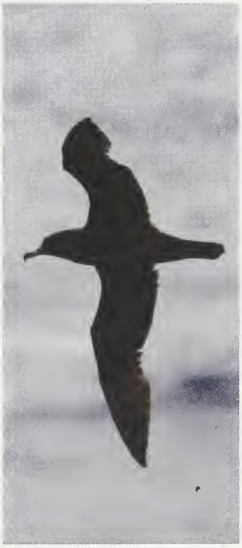

Figure 3. Flesh-footed Shearwater *Ardenna carneipes*, off northern Madagascar, 25 January 2014, showing its bicoloured bill, shorter, more rounded tail and broader wings than the locally common Wedge-tailed Shearwater *A. pacifica* (Dominic P. Rollinson)

Puffin à pieds pâles *Ardenna carneipes*, au large du nord de Madagascar, 25 janvier 2014, montrant son bec bicolore, sa queue plus courte et plus arrondie et ses ailes plus larges que celles du Puffin fouquet *A. pacifica*. Ce dernier est localement plus commun (Dominic P. Rollinson)

temptator occurs on Mohéli, Comoros, *c*.500 km from north-west Madagascar (Safford & Hawkins 2013), but the existence of an unknown breeding population closer to Madagascar cannot be ruled out. These represent the second and third records of Tropical Shearwater from Madagascan waters, the only previous sighting being *c*.80 km off Tulear (Safford & Hawkins 2013).

Flesh-footed Shearwater *Ardenna carneipes*

One was seen off north Madagascar in water >1,000 m deep (Fig. 1). The bird flew to investigate the vessel and followed it for several minutes. The bird was identified by its fairly short, rounded tail in combination with broader wings and a pale bill with obvious dark tip, easily separating it from the commoner Wedge-tailed Shearwater *A. pacifica* (Onley & Schofield 2007; Fig. 3).

Flesh-footed Shearwater is considered to be a regular migrant to the Malagasy region (Safford & Hawkins 2013). However, until recently there were very few records, probably due to confusion with the similar Wedge-tailed Shearwater, which is common throughout the region (Safford & Hawkins 2013). Most sightings are from southern and eastern Madagascar, with three birds seen around Europa Island, but there are no records from further north in the Mozambique Channel (Safford & Hawkins 2013). Vagrants have occurred further north, with seven records from Seychelles, in May–July and October–December, including at least 100 at the edge of the Seychelles Bank east of Mahé, a region almost never visited by ornithologists, seen daily over a three-week period in July, suggesting the species may be common (Skerrett *et al.* 2006, 2007 and *in Bull. ABC* 22: 109).

Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*

Two singles were observed off northern and one off western Madagascar (Fig. 1). Two were over water >1,000 m deep. Nine birds, seen briefly or at great distance, could not be identified to species and were treated as Bulwer's / Jouanin's Petrel *B. fallax* (Table 1). Those seen sufficiently well were separated from Jouanin's Petrel by their more delicate structure, longer caudal projection and more delicate bill, as well as differences in the pale upperwing-coverts (Onley & Scofield 2007; Fig. 4). Flight pattern was also different: Bulwer's Petrel showed a more erratic flight with regular flapping, compared to Jouanin's Petrel which did not flap as much and would generally fly higher above the ocean in a more direct manner.

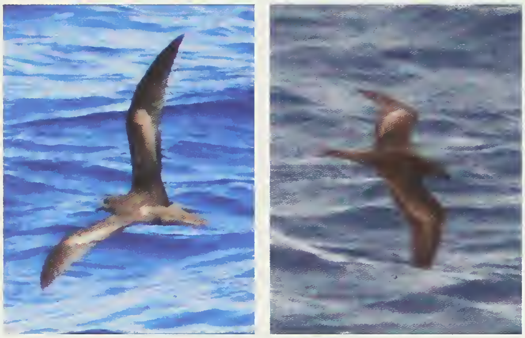

Figure 4. Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*, off northern Madagascar, 1 February 2014 (left) and Jouanin's Petrel *B. fallax*, off northern Madagascar, 21 January 2014; note differences in shape of paler upperwing-coverts, with Bulwer's Petrel being more teardrop-shaped and more crisply defined. Jouanin's Petrel also has a heavier bill and shorter tail (Dominic P. Rollinson)

Pétrel de Bulwer *Bulweria bulwerii*, 1er février 2014 (à gauche) et Pétrel de Jouanin *B. fallax*, 21 janvier 2014, tous deux photographiés au large du nord de Madagascar ; noter les différences dans la forme des couvertures plus pâles du dessus de l'aile, celles du Pétrel de Bulwer étant plus en forme de larme et mieux définies. Le Pétrel de Jouanin a également un bec plus fort et une queue plus courte (Dominic P. Rollinson)

Table 1. Sightings of rare seabird species off northern and western Madagascar, January–February 2014.

Tableau 1. Observations d'oiseaux de mer rares dans les eaux au nord et à l'ouest de Madagascar, janvier–février 2014.

Species	**Date**	**Location**	**Number**
Barau's Petrel *Pterodroma baraui*	15 January	23°03'06"S 43°09'30"E	1
Tropical Shearwater *Puffinus bailloni*	17 January	17°04'24"S 43°46'30"E	1
	22 January	*c.*12°S 48°E	1
Flesh-footed Shearwater *Ardenna carneipes*	25 January	12°28'52"S 49°55'26"E	1
Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*	16 January	17°46'34"S 43°09'27"E	1
	1 February	11°16'36"S 48°52'52"E	1
Jouanin's Petrel *Bulweria fallax*	18 January	11°50'00"S 47°58'48"E	1
	21 January	12°04'11"S 48°25'37"E	1
	30 January	11°48'56"S 49°49'01"E	1
	2 February	11°54'40"S 48°58'34"E	2
Jouanin's / Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria fallax / bulwerii*	27 January	11°52'25"S 49°59'00"E	2
	31 January	11°25'02"S 50°02'04"E	1
	31 January	11°25'06"S 50°02'06"E	1
	1 February	11°37'43"S 49°29'09"E	1
	1 February	11°39'24"S 49°26'17"E	1
	2 February	11°54'53"S 48°58'46"E	1
	2 February	11°44'49"S 48°50'32"E	1
	7 February	12°52'47"S 50°22'41"E	1
Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanities oceanicus*	17 January	17°15'53"S 43°34'09"E	1
Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*	23 January	11°06'14"S 48°44'32"E	1

Bulwer's Petrel is a scarce migrant in the Malagasy region, with most records south of Réunion (Safford & Hawkins 2013); most Indian Ocean records are thought to originate from the north-west Pacific breeding population (Marchant & Higgins 1990). There are scattered records throughout the region, mostly from waters east and south of Madagascar (Safford & Hawkins 2013). The only records west of Madagascar are of three birds south of Europa Island (Veit *et al.* 2007) and another two *c.*250 km south of Juan de Nova Island (Read *et al.* 2014), all seen in January. There are only two authenticated records north of Madagascar, both from Seychelles in June: a single on Cousin Island and two *c.*200 km south-east of Mahé (Skerrett *et al.* 2011 and *in Bull. ABC* 22:

109). An old published record 300 km west of the Amirantes in April was not accepted by Seychelles Bird Records Committee (SBRC) due to the absence of any documentation (Bailey *et al.* 1968).

Jouanin's Petrel *Bulweria fallax*

Four confirmed sightings of five individuals were made off northern Madagascar in waters >1,000 m deep (Fig. 1). All birds had obviously pale upperwing-coverts (Fig. 3), with some showing extensive pale feathering around the forehead and chin, suggesting they were moulting (Ryan 2005). Van den Berg *et al.* (1991) noted that the majority of Jouanin's Petrels in the northern Indian Ocean in June–July also had pale upperwing-coverts.

Little is known of either the distribution at sea or breeding biology of Jouanin's Petrel. Its single known breeding colony was only recently discovered, on Socotra, between Yemen and Somalia (Taleb 2002), and there have been comparatively few sightings at sea away from the Arabian coast, probably due to its small population and the difficulties of separating this species from Bulwer's Petrel. Although most sightings have been made in the north-west Indian Ocean, the species is known to reach the south-east Indian Ocean in smaller numbers (Bailey 1968, Parson 2000, Ryan *et al.* 2013, Sinclair & Langrand 2013). According to Sinclair & Langrand (2013) it is rare near Madagascar, with most records from much further north, closer to Seychelles. On a number of voyages throughout the western Indian Ocean, Bailey (1968) had regular sightings around the equator, with only one further south, at 08°S. Safford & Hawkins (2013) mention that the species is probably a regular migrant in the Malagasy region in October–February, with most sightings from the north. Veit *et al.* (2007) had several sightings north-west and north-east of Madagascar in January. SBRC has accepted 12 records in Seychelles waters, with reports in all months except January and August–September (Skerrett *et al.* 2011 and *in Bull. ABC* 22: 109).

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*

One seen off north-west Madagascar (Fig. 1) was identified by its dark brown/black plumage throughout, except the white rump and pale brown upperwing-coverts. Its underwings were entirely black, differentiating the species from the similar European Storm-petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* (Onley & Scofield 2007). Although the species is thought to be a regular passage migrant in the region, there are very few confirmed records from Madagascar and its status is considered uncertain (Safford & Hawkins 2013).

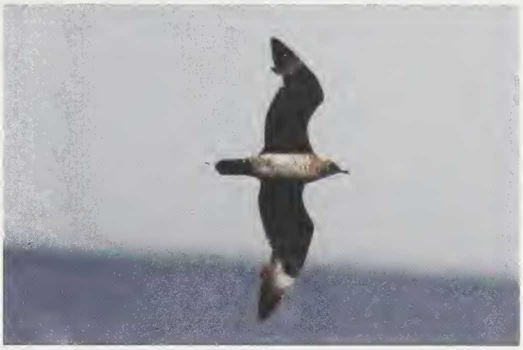

Figure 5. First-winter Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*, off northern Madagascar, 23 January 2014 (Dominic P. Rollinson)

Labbe pomarin *Stercorarius pomarinus* de premier hiver, au large du nord de Madagascar, 23 janvier 2014 (Dominic P. Rollinson)

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*

One seen off northern Madagascar (Figs. 1 & 5) was identified as a first-winter and differentiated from Arctic Skua *S. parasiticus* by its uniform dark head, pale hind-collar, pale uppertail-coverts, boldly barred undertail-coverts, broad-based wings and distinctly bicoloured bill (Harrison 1982). There is only one previous record for Madagascar, one 11.5 km off the south-west coast at Anakao (Safford & Hawkins 2013).

Other seabirds

An additional 13 seabird species, described as regular in the region, were encountered (Safford & Hawkins 2013; Table 2). Several of these were common only along the coast. Some regularly investigated the vessel, such as Red-footed *Sula sula* and Masked Boobies *S. dactylatra*, and White-tailed Tropicbirds *Phaethon lepturus*. Red-footed Boobies were observed aerially hunting flying fish flushed by the moving vessel.

The sightings reported here suggest that some species, particularly Bulwer's and Jouanin's Petrels, may be more frequent in the south-west Indian Ocean than previously thought. As there

Table 2. Other seabirds observed off northern Madagascar, January–February 2014.

Tableau 2. Autres oiseaux de mer observés dans les eaux au nord de Madagascar, janvier–février 2014.

Species	No. of sightings	Area
Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Ardenna pacifica*	Common	Throughout
Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel*	Common	Throughout
Greater Frigatebird *Fregata minor*	Common	Throughout
White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus*	Common	North / north-west
Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*	Common	Throughout
Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra*	Common	North / north-west
Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*	Common	Throughout
Lesser Noddy *Anous tenuirostris*	Common	North only
Sooty Tern *Onychoprion fuscatus*	Common	Throughout
Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus*	4	Coastal, north-west
Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*	Common	Coastal, throughout
Lesser Crested Tern *Thalasseus bengalensis*	Common	Coastal, throughout
Greater Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii*	Common	Coastal, throughout

are relatively few ornithological data from the seas around Madagascar, our knowledge of species occurrence and abundance awaits clarification in many cases.

Acknowledgements

I thank Bob Flood, Gary Allport, Gérard Rocamora, Barrie Rose, Peter Ryan and Adrian Skerrett for their help with species identification from my photographs. Thanks to the crew of the *MV Maria* who routinely pointed out birds to me at sea. Adrian Skerrett and Ron Demey commented on earlier versions of this paper.

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New information on the nest and eggs of Long-billed Tetraka *Bernieria madagascariensis*

Marcel Achille Ratsaralasy

Nouvelles données sur le nid et les œufs du Tétraka malgache *Bernieria madagascariensis*. Le Tétraka malgache *Bernieria madagascariensis* est un passériforme commun mais peu connu de la famille malgache endémique Bernieridae. Un nid a été observé le 10 novembre 2013 dans la forêt d'Ambatovy, district de Moramanga, à 1.075 m d'altitude, dans la partie ouest de la zone de conservation de l'exploitation minière de Ambatovy Minérals S.A. Le nid en forme de corbeille cylindrique était situé à 120 cm au-dessus du sol, avait un diamètre interne de 10 cm et une profondeur de 8 cm, et contenait deux œufs blancs tachetés de brun et de rouge.

The family Bernieridae, commonly known as tetrakas or Malagasy warblers, is endemic to Madagascar. It comprises 11 species, currently treated in eight genera, based on morphology: *Xanthomixis*, *Bernieria*, *Oxylabes*, *Crossleyia*, *Hartertula*, *Thamnornis*, *Randia* and *Cryptosylvicola*; all these genera are monospecific except *Xanthomixis* which contains four species. They were recognised as a monophyletic group, and a family, only with the advent of DNA analysis in the 1990s (Cibois *et al.* 2001, 2010, Raherilalao & Goodman 2011, Safford & Hawkins 2013). Most are common in certain forest types, but despite this abundance knowledge of their biology is very patchy.

The type genus of the family, *Bernieria*, contains a single species, Long-billed Tetraka *B. madagascariensis*, although there is evidence for cryptic speciation (N. Block *in* Raherilalao & Goodman 2011, Safford & Hawkins 2013). *Bernieria* is a robust, green-and-yellow understorey passerine superficially resembling a greenbul of the genus *Phyllastrephus*, in which it was long placed. It is common in rainforest and western deciduous forests, and is not considered threatened. Given its abundance and often conspicuous habits, the species' breeding biology is surprisingly poorly known, with no detailed descriptions available. However, at least 20 eggs exist or have existed in museum collections, and brief notes and photographs of two nests indicate that it is a cup suspended between twigs (Hawkins & Sartain 2013). In the east, eggs appear to be laid between August and February or March, but perhaps especially in November–January; in the west the season may be more protracted. However,

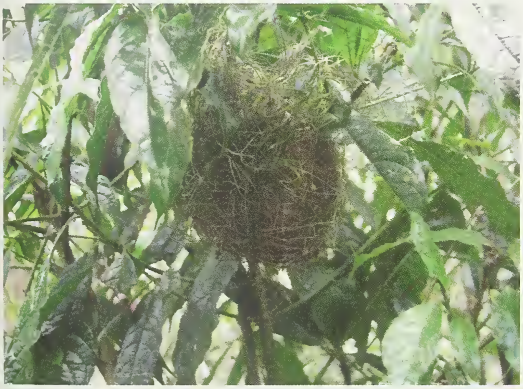

Figure 1. Nest of Long-billed Tetraka *Bernieria madagascariensis* in a *Helichrysum* sp., Ambatovy, Madagascar, 10 November 2013 (M. A. Ratsaralasy)

Nid du Tétraka malgache *Bernieria madagascariensis* dans un *Helichrysum* sp., Ambatovy, Madagascar, 10 novembre 2013 (M. A. Ratsaralasy)

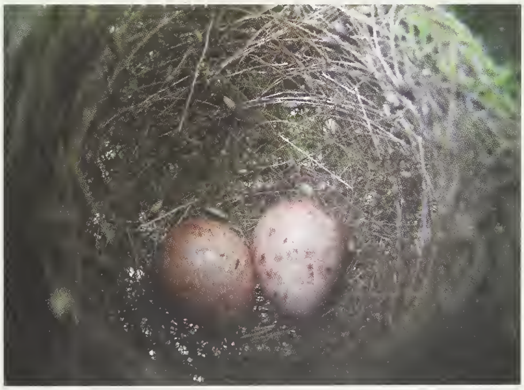

Figure 2. Eggs of Long-billed Tetraka *Bernieria madagascariensis*, Ambatovy, Madagascar, 10 November 2013 (M. A. Ratsaralasy)

Œufs du Tétraka malgache *Bernieria madagascariensis*, Ambatovy, Madagascar, 10 novembre 2013 (M. A. Ratsaralasy)

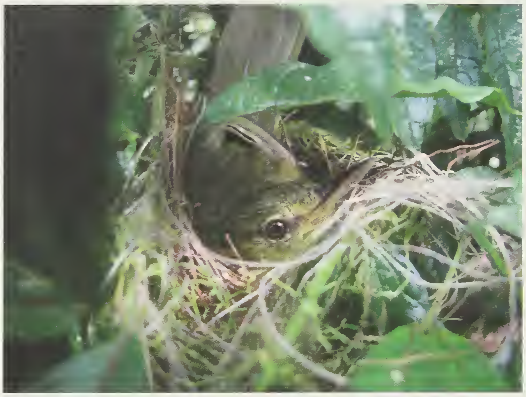

Figure 3. Long-billed Tetraka *Bernieria madagascariensis* incubating, Ambatovy, Madagascar, 10 November 2013 (M. A. Ratsaralasy)

Tétraka malgache *Bernieria madagascariensis* en train de couver, Ambatovy, Madagascar, 10 novembre 2013 (M. A. Ratsaralasy)

available information is sufficiently limited that any additional data merit reporting (R. J. Safford pers. comm.).

In November 2013, with colleagues from Asity Madagascar, I undertook field work in the forested 'conservation zone' of the Ambatovy mining site, near the town of Moramanga in eastern Madagascar. The forest is somewhat disturbed and consists of a mosaic characteristic of the transition between mid-altitude and upper montane forest (Dickinson & Berner 2010). On 10 November, we found a nest of Long-billed Tetraka at an altitude of 1,075 m at *c.*18°49'S 48°17'E. The habitat immediately around the nest was primary forest with large trees and shrubs on gently sloping ground (5% gradient). The nest tree was adjacent to a trail. The nest was basket-shaped, sited 1.2 m above ground, attached to and supported by a branch (diameter 15 cm) of a *Helichrysum* sp. (Compositae) shrub, which was 1.8 m tall with a diameter at breast height of 15 cm (Fig. 1). The principal nest material was small twigs. The nest's internal diameter was 10 cm and internal depth 8 cm. It contained two eggs with brown and red speckles on a white background (Fig. 2); these were being incubated at the time of observation by what appeared to be a female (based on short bill length, which differs markedly between the sexes: Hawkins & Sartain 2013; Fig. 3).

Circumstances did not permit follow-up observations. All details observed were consistent with the previous, very limited, data. The discovery of a nest in relatively accessible forest, beside a trail, in November when much field work takes place in Madagascar's humid forest, adds to the sense of surprise at the great rarity of other such observations. Similarly, the nesting behaviour of the also abundant Spectacled Tetraka *Xanthomixis zosterops* was almost unknown until the work of Temba *et al.* (2014).

Acknowledgements

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First record of Barau’s Petrel *Pterodroma baraui* for Namibia, South Atlantic

Marijke N. de Boer

Première observation du Pétrel de Barau *Pterodroma baraui* en Namibie, Atlantique sud. Un Pétrel de Barau *Pterodroma baraui* a été photographié à environ 96 km au large du nord de la Namibie (21°05’S 12°30’E) le 4 février 2014. C’est la première donnée pour la Namibie et seulement la deuxième pour l’Océan atlantique. C’est aussi la plus occidentale et, avec les observations récentes au large de l’Afrique du Sud, elle pourrait indiquer une extension de l’aire de distribution vers l’ouest de l’espèce.

Between 10 January and 6 March 2014, dedicated marine fauna observations were undertaken 64–130 km off the coast of Namibia from a geophysical survey vessel. On 4 February 2014 at 07.46 hrs a grey-and-white gadfly petrel *Pterodroma* sp. was observed *c.*96 km off the coast (21°04’83”S 12°29’62”E; Fig. 1). The weather was fine with slight cloud cover, a light south-westerly wind (9 km/h) and a gentle swell (<2 m). The sea surface temperature was 21.5°C, air temperature 22°C, and the water depth at this location was 478 m.

The petrel approached from the stern and was first observed flying high and directly over the vessel. It was rather long-winged and the dark black cap contrasting with the white forehead was immediately obvious. It was estimated to be slightly smaller than Great-winged Petrel *Pterodroma macroptera*, which was regularly seen throughout the survey. The photographs (Figs. 2–3), supplemented by the features noted at sea, identify the bird as a Barau’s Petrel *P. baraui* based on the following features: (1) distinct black cap and white forehead; (2) pronounced broken neck collar; (3) white belly and underwings; (4) dark tips and distinct blackish margins to the underwings; (5) carpal bar extending across 75% of the ‘arm’ on the underwing; (6) grey upperparts with blackish M-shape across the open wings (not clearly visible from the angle at which the photographs were obtained); and (7) a rather long-winged appearance.

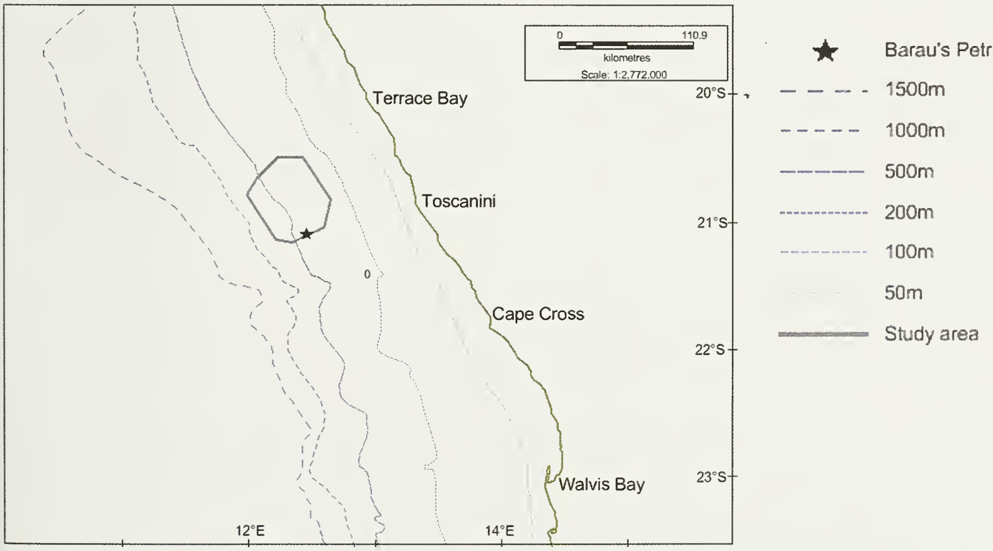
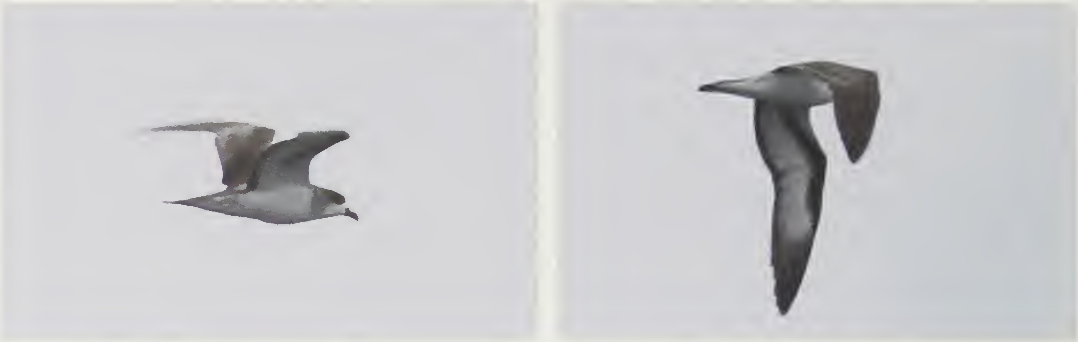


Figure 1. Location of the sighting of Barau’s Petrel *Pterodroma baraui*, the study area and bathymetric contours. Carte indiquant la position de l’observation du Pétrel de Barau *Pterodroma baraui*, la zone d’étude et les contours bathymétriques.



Figures 2–3. Barau's Petrel *Pterodroma baraui, c.*96 km off Namibia, 4 February 2014 (Marijke N. de Boer)
Pétrel de Barau *Pterodroma baraui,* à environ 96 km au large de la Namibie, 4 février 2014 (Marijke N. de Boer)

Several dark *Pterodroma* spp. with pale bellies and white underwings can be confused with Barau's Petrel (Harrison 1987, Flood & Fisher 2013). Juan Fernández *P. externa*, Hawaiian *P. phaeopygia*, White-necked *P. cervicalis* and the smaller Vanuatu *P. occulata* and Black-winged Petrels *P. nigripennis* were eliminated because of the petrel's diagnostic underwing pattern in combination with overall greyish-brown upperparts, a dark cap and no distinct collar. The long-winged appearance and the bird's estimated size helped to eliminate other similar but smaller '*Cookilaria*' petrels. The lack of a white hindneck combined with the extent of black on the underwing ruled out any remaining contenders.

Barau's Petrel is an Endangered petrel that breeds only on Réunion in the south-west Indian Ocean (BirdLife International 2014). Recent studies have demonstrated that it migrates up to 5,000 km east from its breeding colony to the central and eastern Indian Ocean in winter (Pinet *et al.* 2009, 2011). Records at sea tend to show a seasonal variation in distribution, with most birds observed in the south-west Indian Ocean, 200–2,000 km south of Reunion, during the breeding season in September–April (Gill 1967, Jouanin & Gill 1967, Frost 1981, Bourne 1989, Stahl & Bartle 1991).

The first Barau's Petrel for Mozambique was recorded in November 1987 and for South Africa off northern KwaZulu-Natal in October 1988 (Lambert 2001), with a further record there in November 2003 (Sutherland 2005). On 5 January 2000, one was observed between Cape Town and Marion Island at 40°40'S 26°55'E (B. Dyer pers. comm.). More records were made in November 2005 off KwaZulu-Natal (Ryan *et al.* 2006) and in September 2007 off Richard's Bay (Southern African Rarities 2014). Since then there have been more records (Southern African Rarities 2014), especially off KwaZulu-Natal and during the breeding season: 10 October 2008 off Durban (*n* = 14); November–December 2010 off Richard's Bay and Kosi Bay (*n* = 33); 7 May 2012 off Durban (*n* = 1); 21 January 2013 off St. Francis Bay (*n* = 1); 5 October 2013 off Durban (*n* = 1); and 22–24 November 2013 off Durban (*n* = 8). On 8 December 2008, the first Atlantic Ocean record of Barau's Petrel was made at the Subtropical Front (39°S 17°20'E), south of Cape Town (Joiris *et al.* 2013).

The ocean off Namibia is strongly influenced by the Benguela Current, a major feature of which is an upwelling with a high nutrient supply to surface waters, which leads to high biological production and large fish stocks (Shannon *et al.* 2003). Consequently, this area should offer foraging opportunities to vagrants such as Barau's Petrel.

The sighting reported here is the first for Namibia and the westernmost to date. It complements the recent records made off KwaZulu-Natal (Southern African Rarities 2014). Although this increase may reflect the greater number of pelagic trips, improved identification skills or awareness and the use of digital cameras, no records of Barau's Petrels were documented during pelagic surveys in the 1970s off KwaZulu-Natal (I. Sinclair pers. comm.). The increase in sightings therefore may indicate a westward movement of the species as previously suggested by Lambert (2001).

Acknowledgements

These observations were made during a geophysical survey by Tullow Kudu. I thank Dave Bolger (Tullow Oil) for his support. Special thanks to Bob Flood (Scilly Pelagics) who identified the petrel and to Andy Williams for recognising the importance of this observation. Peter Ryan (Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology, University of Cape Town) and Trevor Hardaker (South African Rarities Committee) provided valuable information regarding the KwaZulu-Natal records; the former also made useful comments that improved the accuracy and presentation of this note.

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First breeding record of Heuglin's Wheatear *Oenanthe heuglini* for Senegal

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Première donnée sur la reproduction du Traquet de Heuglin *Oenanthe heuglini* au Sénégal. En avril 2012, jusqu'à cinq Traquets de Heuglin *Oenanthe heuglini*, dont un adulte avec trois jeunes, ont été observés à deux endroits sur le plateau de Dande (12°21'N 12°19'W) et Nandoumary (12°19'N 12°20'W), à l'extrême sud-est du Sénégal, à quelques kilomètres de la frontière avec la Guinée-Conakry. Il s'agit de la première donnée de reproduction de cette espèce pour le pays.

On 7 April 2012, while censusing birds on a plateau near Dande (12°21'N 12°19'W), Kédougou region, south-east Senegal, GM & JM observed an adult Heuglin's Wheatear *Oenanthe heuglini* with at least three dependent juveniles. Ten days later, on 17 April, what was presumably the same adult and a single fledgling were seen again at the same place (Fig. 1). On 20 April, an adult was observed near the village of Nandoumary (12°19'N 12°20'W), *c.*3.5 km from the first site (Fig. 2).

The adults' overall appearance, especially that at Dande, were reminiscent of Isabelline Wheatear *O. isabellina*, but several features permitted us to eliminate that species as well as others that could occur in the area, such as Northern *O. oenanthe,* Black-eared *O. hispanica* and Desert Wheatears *O. deserti*, none of which breeds in western Africa (Borrow & Demey 2014). First, the dark chestnut head, upperparts and wings contrasted strongly with the rufous-buff underparts, a pattern not shared by Isabelline Wheatear. Female Northern, Black-eared and Desert Wheatears show some contrast, but only between the wing feathers and body. Isabelline shows a less contrasting pattern, with the exception of the black alula and dark primaries and tertials, which are usually very conspicuous. The adult in Fig. 1 shows some contrast between the flight feathers and coverts. This might reflect wear, as the belly was also quite pale buff, rather than rufous. The pale buff supercilium strongly contrasted with the chestnut crown and dark brown lores. Contrast is weak in Northern, Black-eared and Desert Wheatears, but quite strong in Isabelline. However, Isabelline's supercilium is white and contrasts with the sandy-brown head and pale brown lores. The 'T'-patterned tail eliminated Desert Wheatear, whose tail has a very broad black band. Black-eared Wheatear shows a large

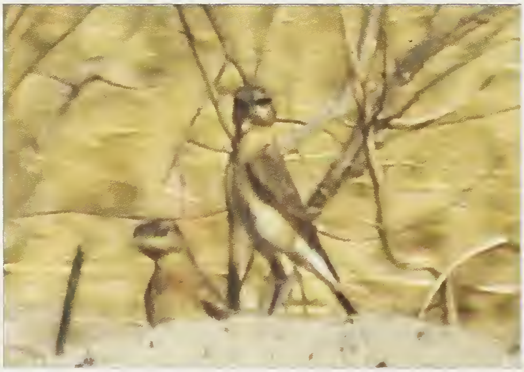

Figure 1. Adult Heuglin's Wheatear *Oenanthe heuglini* (right) with fledgling, Dande, Senegal, 17 April 2012 (Guillermo Mayor)

Traquet de Heuglin *Oenanthe heuglini*, adulte (à droite) avec jeune, Dande, Sénégal, 17 avril 2012 (Guillermo Mayor)

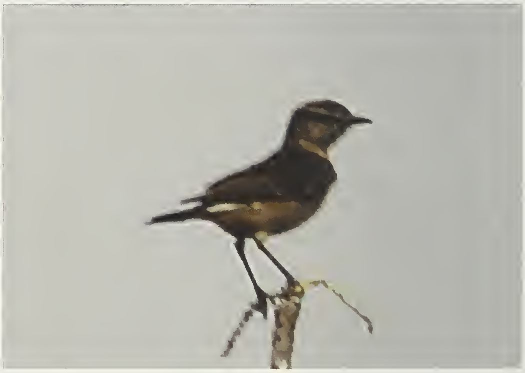

Figure 2. Adult Heuglin's Wheatear *Oenanthe heuglini*, Nandoumary, Senegal, 20 April 2012 (Guillermo Mayor)

Traquet de Heuglin *Oenanthe heuglini* adulte, Nandoumary, Sénégal, 20 avril 2012 (Guillermo Mayor) amount of white in its tail with an almost broken black 'T'. Isabelline and Northern Wheatears' tail patterns are more similar to Heuglin's. However, in Heuglin's the black band covers half of the tail and the inner edge of the 'T' appears rounded, as in the individuals we observed.

The habitat at Dande consisted of a broad glade within wooded savanna on a plateau with many mushroom-like termite mounds. There was no grassy vegetation due to dry-season fires. Habitat at Nandoumary was similar: open, burnt grassland with many mushroom-like termitaria. Both plateaux are 470 m high and represent the north-westernmost extension of the Fouta-Djallon massif (Fernández-García *et al.* 2013).

Heuglin's Wheatear is widespread in the Sahel belt, from Mali to Ethiopia and Eritrea. The southern limits of its range are formed by the northern savannas between north-east Guinea and Cameroon and the Central African Republic (Collar 2005). The species' preferred habitat consists of open fields with rocks and low grass, and often burnt grasslands. It is considered a resident and intra-African migrant. Although the species is common in Mali and north-eastern Guinea, with records for Mauritania (Isenmann *et al.* 2010) and Guinea-Bissau (Guilherme 2014), there is just one previous record in Senegal, of a single in Djoudj National Park on 18 January 2007 (Le Nevé *et al.* 2011), and breeding had not been recorded (Borrow & Demey 2011, Dowsett *et al.* 2014). The nearest limits of the previously known breeding range lie *c.*300 km east of our study area, in Mali (Borrow & Demey 2014). The dates of our breeding record accord with those of the species in the western Sahel, i.e. the late dry season (December–April: Macgregor 1950).

Both sites where Heuglin's Wheatear was recorded lie within the Dindéfello Community Reserve, where the Spanish branch of the Jane Goodall Institute is developing a conservation project for the West African subspecies of Chimpanzee *Pan troglodytes verus* and promoting a local-community, ecotourism-based development. Recently, the reserve has been classified as an Important Bird Area by BirdLife International (A. Ajagbe *in litt.* 2014).

Acknowledgements

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First record of Franklin's Gull *Leucophaeus pipixcan* for Ghana

David Fisher[a] and James Ntakor[b]

Première observation de la Mouette de Franklin *Leucophaeus pipixcan* au Ghana. Une Mouette de Franklin *Leucophaeus pipixcan* adulte en plumage nuptial a été observée le 8 mai 2011 sur la lagune Sakumono, au Ghana. C'est la premiére donnée pour le pays, d'une espèce qui, en Afrique de l'Ouest, n'avait été rapportée que de la Mauritanie et la Sénégambie.

In the late morning of 8 May 2011 we were birdwatching at Sakumono Lagoon in coastal Ghana, scanning for waders, gulls and terns, and hoping for some late migrants. A selection of commoner waterbirds was present, but nothing unexpected. While DF was scanning the lagoon one final time with binoculars, an adult Franklin's Gull *Leucophaeus pipixcan* in full breeding plumage flew into his field of view. Being familiar with the species from elsewhere in the world, this distinctive gull presented no identification challenge to DF. We were both able to follow it in our telescopes as it flew west along the edge of the lagoon, parallel to the coast, before landing out of view. We jumped in our car and drove to get closer. JN relocated it immediately, in a lagoon with Common Greenshanks *Tringa nebularia* and Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa.* DF tried to digiscope it, but as the bird was rather distant and conditions were quite hazy, the results were poor. However, DF did obtain some adequate video footage. After a while, the bird took off and flew right past us giving excellent views, then over the road and out to sea. It was not seen again.

DF took the following description immediately after the observation: 'Medium-sized gull. Full black hood with broad white eye-lids. Shortish red bill. White below with a faint pinkish flush to the breast. Medium-grey mantle and wings (paler than in Laughing Gull *L. atricilla*). In flight, broad white trailing edge to wing formed by white tips to secondaries and inner primaries. Narrow white tips to outer primaries, black subterminal band across outer 4–5 primaries, broad white band between black on wingtips and grey of wing (*contra* Laughing Gull, in which black on the primaries is extensive and there is no white between the black and the grey of the wing). Tail pure white, therefore a full adult.'

Figure 1. Franklin's Gull / Mouette de Franklin *Leucophaeus pipixcan*, Sakumono Lagoon, Ghana, 8 May 2011 (David Fisher)

A very poor digiscoped image was seen by the editors, but is not suitable for reproduction. A copy of the video, which shows more detail, has been archived at the Natural History Museum, Tring, UK.

Franklin's Gull breeds exclusively in North America and is a long-distance migrant that winters in South America as far south as Chile and Argentina (Malling Olson & Larsson 2003). In West Africa, it has been recorded in coastal Mauritania and Senegambia, but there are no previous records for Ghana (Borrow & Demey 2014, Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2014). In southern Africa, there are records on the coast, from Walvis Bay, Namibia, where it has been present almost annually since the 1990s, to Lake St. Lucia, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, mostly in the northern winter (Hockey *et al.* 2005). Birds that successfully winter in South Africa perhaps migrate north in the boreal spring through other parts of Africa. In winter 2010–11, there were several records in South Africa (per T. Hardaker, sa-rarebirdnews@googlegroups.com) and there were a number of sightings elsewhere on the continent during the first half of 2011, including Libya on 1 February (Bourass *et al.* 2013), Egypt on 12 March (Jiguet *et al.* 2012) and Uganda on 8 June (J. Rossouw *in Bull. ABC* 19: 108).

While undoubtedly a rarity in Africa, Franklin's Gull could occur as a vagrant anywhere on the continent and those inclined to study gull flocks on a regular basis should be aware of the possibility.

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First records of Little Rush Warbler *Bradypterus baboecala* for Benin

Johannes Merz[a]*, Sharon Merz*[b] *and Bruno Portier*[c]

Premières mentions de la Bouscarle caqueteuse *Bradypterus baboecala* pour le Bénin. En décembre 2012, plusieurs Bouscarles caqueteuses *Bradypterus baboecala* ont été observées, photographiées et leur chant enregistré dans la Plaine du Sô (06°30'N 02°23'E) au sud du Bénin. Depuis, l'espèce y est rencontrée régulièrement et a également été contactée plus au nord dans la Basse Vallée de l'Ouémé. Ces observations remplissent une lacune dans la distribution de l'espèce en Afrique occidentale.

On 1 December 2012, JM & SM spent the morning in the Plaine du Sô, in the lower Ouémé Valley, an Important Bird Area and Ramsar Site in south-eastern Benin, and habitat of Anambra Waxbill *Estrilda poliopareia* (Plomp *et al.* 2012). While driving from Akassato towards Sô-Ava on the Sô River, they heard a distant bird song with which they were unfamiliar. At a second stop, at *c.*07.30 hrs, they heard two more similar songs emerging from a patch of 2–3 m-tall *Typha australis* reeds *c.*4 m from the road (*c.*06°29'44"N 02°23'22"E; Fig. 1). The song, which was sound-recorded (Fig. 2), consisted of an accelerating series of 11–16 chirps. Comparison with a recording from Cameroon on Chappuis (2000) confirmed that it was given by Little Rush Warbler *Bradypterus baboecala*, a species not previously recorded in Benin.

Scanning the *Typha* with binoculars revealed a couple of small warbler-like birds continuously flicking their broadly fanned tails, but remaining partially hidden. They were dark olive-brown overall, with a whitish throat bordered below by blackish streaks. Their bellies were pale to yellowish white. Their bills were relatively long and fine, only slightly shorter than head length. They occasionally flew short distances within the patch of *Typha*, snapping their wings. Both their appearance and general behaviour matched the description of Little Rush Warbler (Borrow & Demey 2001).

The birds could not be easily confused, principally due to their distinctive song. European Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* and similar species lack the long, broad and fanned tail, and the streaking on the lower throat. Great Reed Warbler *A. arundinaceus* and Great Swamp Warbler *A. rufescens*, both recorded in the same area, are considerably larger and bulkier with totally different vocalisations. The two cisticolas commonly present in the Plaine du Sô, Winding *Cisticola galactotes* and Zitting Cisticola *C. juncidis*, are either smaller and lack the longish tail, or have streaky upperparts. While Little Rush Warbler is

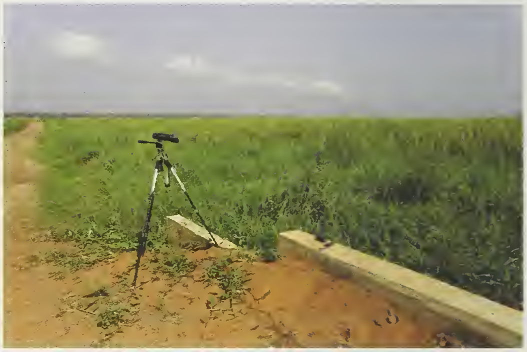

Figure 1. The Plaine du Sô, Benin, where Little Rush Warbler *Bradypterus baboecala* was discovered, 9 December 2012 (Bruno Portier)

La Plaine du Sô, Bénin, où la Bouscarle caqueteuse *Bradypterus baboecala* a été découverte, 9 décembre 2012 (Bruno Portier)

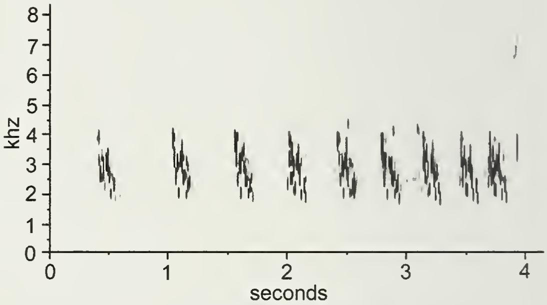

Figure 2. Sonogram of the song of Little Rush Warbler *Bradypterus baboecala*, Plaine du Sô, Benin, 1 December 2012 (song recorded by SM; sonogram produced by JM using Speech Analyzer 3.0.1)

Sonogramme du chant de la Bouscarle caqueteuse *Bradypterus baboecala*, Plaine du Sô, Bénin, 1er décembre 2012 (chant enregistré par SM; sonogramme produit par JM en utilisant Speech Analyzer 3.0.1)

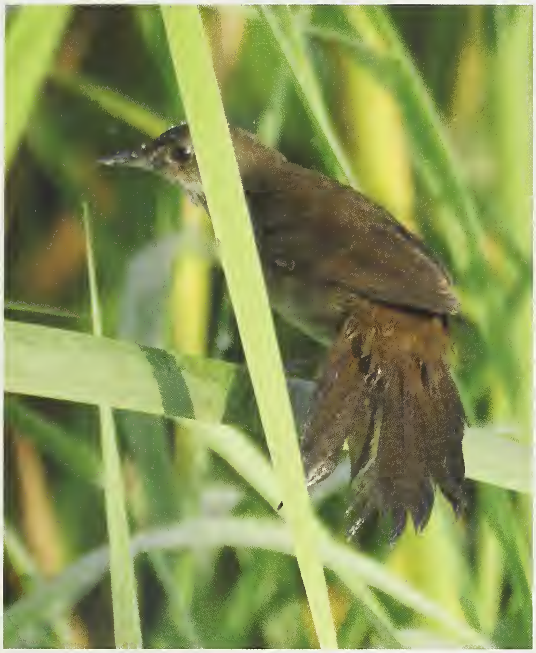

Figure 3. Little Rush Warbler *Bradypterus baboecala* fanning its tail, Plaine du Sô, Benin, 9 December 2012 (Bruno Portier)

Bouscarle caqueteuse *Bradypterus baboecala* avec la queue en éventail, Plaine du Sô, Bénin, 9 décembre 2012 (Bruno Portier)

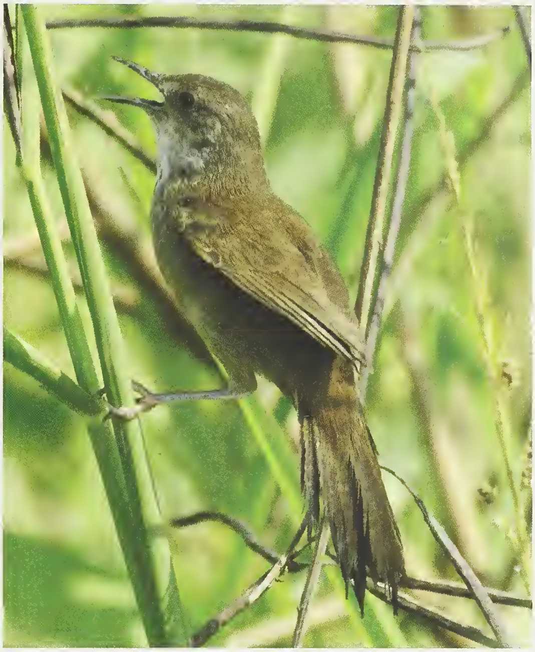

Figure 4. Little Rush Warbler *Bradypterus baboecala* singing, Plaine du Sô, Benin, 9 December 2012 (Bruno Portier)

Bouscarle caqueteuse *Bradypterus baboecala* chantant, Plaine du Sô, Bénin, 9 décembre 2012 (Bruno Portier)

usually described as secretive, we did not find this to be the case, as we were able to observe them well over longer periods and at relatively close range. In total, we noted four singing individuals at three different locations.

A week later, on 9 December, BP visited the same area and was able to make sound-recordings and take photographs (Figs. 3–5); he counted seven singing individuals at three locations. On 15 December, JM & SM undertook a more thorough search along two roads across the floodplains, from Akassato north-east towards the Sô River and south-east towards Sô-Ava, covering a linear corridor of *c*.6 km of suitable habitat. They counted 12 singing individuals at nine different locations. On average, a singing bird was encountered every 500 m of track. Songs came only from the taller *Typha australis* and sometimes *Cyperus papyrus* grasses, but never from the short *Paspalum vaginatum* grasslands. The birds started singing at *c*.05.50 hrs, when it was still dark, and sang with varying intensity throughout the morning. BP noted that they were significantly less active from 12 January 2013 onwards, with the onset of the dry season.

Records from November–December 2014 by other observers (B. Piot pers. comm., T. Helsens pers. comm.) and the relative high density of Little Rush Warblers in the Plaine du Sô indicate the presence of a healthy resident population that is not confined to the small area accessed during our surveys. This is confirmed by other records, including those of a bird heard near the main road next to a floodplain of the Ouémé River north of Goutin (06°44'30"N 02°28'45"E) on 17 December 2012, and of another singing in a *Typha* reedbed bordering the Porto-Novo Lagoon at Djérègbé (06°26'50"N 02°38'23"E) on 17 August 2014. The species probably occurs in suitable vegetation throughout the lower Ouémé–Lake Nokoué and Porto-Novo Lagoon complex.

In West Africa, Little Rush Warbler was until recently known only from Nigeria (Elgood *et al.* 1994), where it was considered rare and very local, having been reported only at Onitsha and two northern locations, Kazaure and Kano. The last decade has produced a record for southern Togo (Selfe 2003) and several for Ghana (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2014), extending its range westwards. A possible record for Côte d'Ivoire

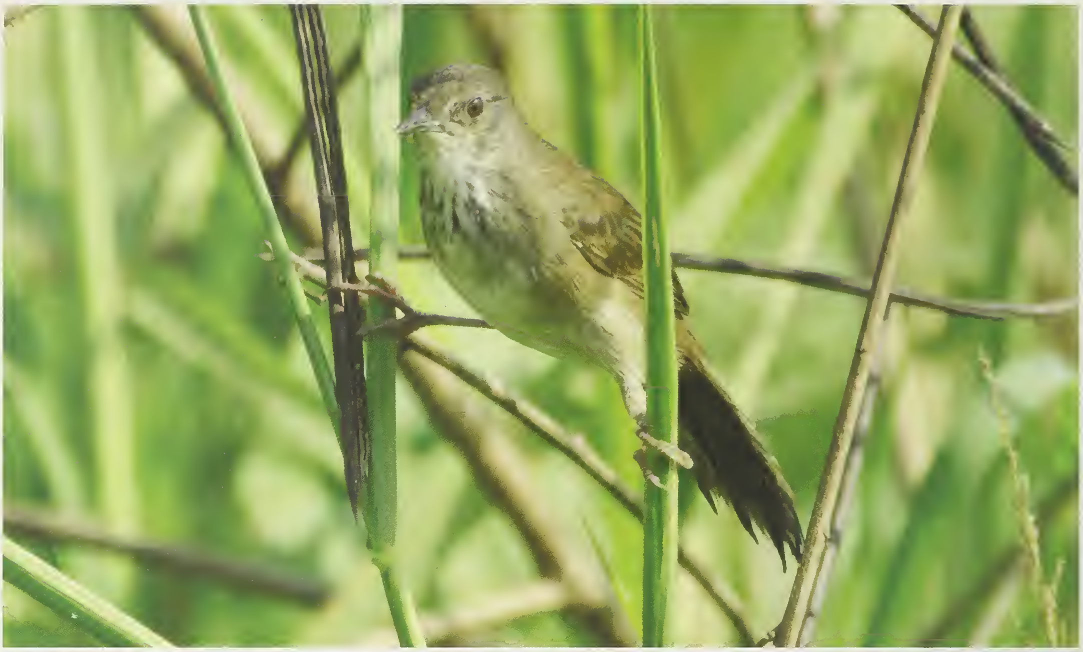

Figure 5. Little Rush Warbler *Bradypterus baboecala*, showing blackish streaking on the lower throat, Plaine du Sô, Benin, 9 December 2012 (Bruno Portier)

Bouscarle caqueteuse *Bradypterus baboecala*, montrant les stries noirâtres sur le bas de la gorge, Plaine du Sô, Bénin, 9 décembre 2012 (Bruno Portier)

is unconfirmed (Thiollay 1985). In the absence of specimens, the race in West Africa remains unknown but is probably *B. b. msiri* (Dickinson & Christidis 2014, Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2014).

The records from south-eastern Benin reported here fill a gap in the species' distribution and suggest that it should be present in suitable habitat elsewhere along the West African coast.

Acknowledgements

We thank Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire for confirming the record and commenting on a draft of this note.

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First record of Forest Swallow *Petrochelidon fuliginosa* for Angola

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Andorinha-da-floresta *Petrochelidon fuliginosa*, uma nova espécie para Angola. A 22 de setembro de 2014 várias andorinhas totalmente escuras foram observadas numa área de floresta tropical (600 m de altitude) associada com a escarpa norte de Angola, na província do Uíge. Com base na sua rápida actividade de vôo, chamamento semelhante ao das andorinhas-rupestres, garganta ruiva e cauda ligeiramente bifurcada sem marcas brancas, foram identificadas como andorinhas-da-floresta *Petrochelidon fuliginosa*. A observação constitui o primeiro registro para Angola e extende a área de distribuição conhecida por pelo menos 700 km para sul desde o centro do Gabão.

Summary. On 22 September 2014, several all-dark swallows were observed in an area of lowland forest (600 m altitude) on the northern Angolan escarpment in Uíge province. Based on their rapid flight, cliff swallow-like calls, russet throats and tails lacking any white markings, they were identified as Forest Swallows *Petrochelidon fuliginosa*. These observations constitute the first record for Angola and extend the known range south from central Gabon by at least 700 km.

On 22 September 2014, we were observing birds *c*.30 km north-west of Quitexe (07°57'S 15°02'E) in Uíge province, Angola, together with J. Francis and R. Rowland. We were in an area of relatively intact lowland rainforest (600 m altitude) on the northern Angolan escarpment, which had been selectively logged during the past two years. Along an access road, we noted several small, dark swallows. On a previous visit to the site MSLM (unpubl.) had recorded Square-tailed Saw-wing *Psalidoprocne nitens*, a considerable extension of its known range: the species had previously been recorded only from the enclave of Cabinda and further north (Traylor 1963, Dean 2000). As we had observed Square-tailed Saw-wing again near Uíge town the previous day, we initially assumed the dark swallows to be this species. However, their wingbeats were very rapid as they darted between the crowns of the tallest trees, so their flight was quite unlike the usually slow and 'casual' action of a saw-wing *Psalidoprocne* sp. A group of *c*.20 Square-tailed Saw-wings flew overhead while we were watching the birds and the contrast was immediately apparent.

Closer inspection revealed that there were *c*.6 birds, all flying in a similar fashion. They called occasionally, making the typical 'chippy' calls of a cliff swallow *Petrochelidon* sp., unlike the calls we have heard from any saw-wing. We observed them for *c*.15 minutes, during which time one perched briefly on a bare branch in the upper canopy. Unfortunately, the light conditions were poor (and the bird was silhouetted against a pale, overcast sky), but through the telescope we could see that the throat was clearly paler than the rest of the plumage, which was uniform blackish brown.

Approximately one hour later, *c*.200 m from the forest edge and *c*.500 m from where we made our initial observations, we located a colony of several hundred Red-throated Cliff Swallows *Petrochelidon rufigula* around their nests under a bridge and on some disused buildings. We noticed the small, dark swallows among them. They were hard to pick out from the far more numerous Red-throated Cliff Swallows, as their flight actions appeared identical.

In the late morning, we again encountered two all-dark swallows, flying low along the vehicle track in front of us and feeding over an adjacent clearing. We observed them for *c*.5 minutes under excellent conditions, around and sometimes below eye level, and at close range (<5–20 m) as they foraged along the track. On several occasions, when they flew directly towards us and banked, we could quite clearly observe that one bird had a strong russet/chestnut throat, whilst the other had the throat slightly buffier. When they banked, they spread their tails, permitting us to verify our earlier impression that they completely lacked white markings, thereby eliminating Rock Martin *Ptyonoprogne fuligula*.

Distinguishing Forest Swallow *Petrochelidon fuliginosa* from Square-tailed Saw-wing can be challenging, but based on a combination of features (flight action, vocalisations and plumage coloration), all consistent with Forest Swallow (Keith *et al.* 1992, Sinclair & Ryan 2003, Borrow & Demey 2014), we present this as the first record of the latter species for Angola. They had (i) very rapid wingbeats and a quick flight action, quite unlike the slower and more 'casual' flight of Square-tailed Saw-wing; (ii) 'chippy' calls like those of a cliff swallow; and (iii) chestnut-coloured throats, compared to the usually greyish-buff coloration of Square-tailed Saw-wing.

Because we had observed breeding activity by hirundines throughout Angola during the previous two weeks, including very obviously by Red-throated Cliff Swallows and Lesser Striped Swallows *Cecropis abyssinica* at the same locality, it is possible that the Forest Swallows were also breeding in the area. The species is known to nest in buildings or in verandahs (Chapin 1948) and we observed the birds flying close to an abandoned building several times, once apparently entering it. We were unable to locate a nest, but it is possible that the birds were breeding among the other swallows, although it should be noted that they normally breed solitarily (Turner & Rose 1989, Keith *et al.* 1992).

Forest Swallow is a resident and local migrant in tropical forests from eastern Nigeria to central Gabon (Turner & Rose 1989, Keith *et al.* 1992, Brosset & Érard 1986). The nearest records appear to come from at least 700 km to the north. However, the northern Angolan escarpment forests represent a known outlier of the Congo Basin forests and have been poorly explored, so the discovery of additional Congolese forest species here is unsurprising. The same site has already yielded one new species for Angola, Yellow-throated Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx flavigularis* (Mills *et al.* 2013), as well as providing extensions to the known ranges of Sabine's Spinetail *Rhaphidura sabini* and Square-tailed Saw-wing (MSLM unpubl.).

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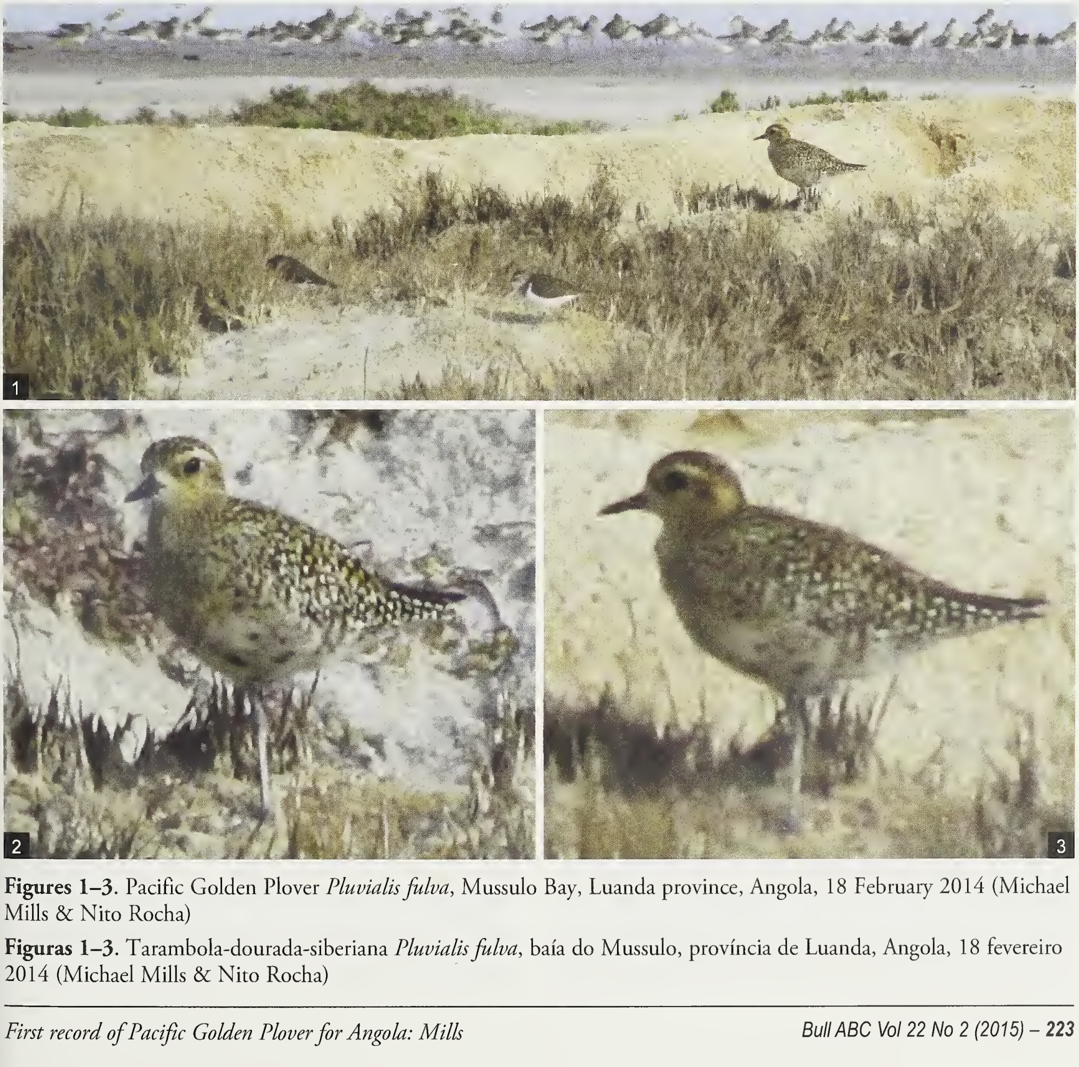
First record of Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* for Angola

Michael S. L. Mills

Primeiro registo de tarambola-dourada-siberiana *Pluvialis fulva* para Angola. A 18 de fevereiro de 2014, duas tarambolas-douradas-siberianas *Pluvialis fulva* foram fotografadas na baía do Mussulo, província de Luanda, Angola. Este é o primeiro registo para o país.

On 18 February 2014 I visited the southern tip of Mussulo Bay, Angola, with N. Rocha and J. Mills. Mussulo is an Important Bird Area located just south of Luanda city and is used by large numbers of Palearctic-breeding shorebirds during the austral summer (Dean 2001). At the far southern tip of the bay we located a single golden plover *Pluvialis* sp. adjacent to some saltpans. We drove to within 20 m of the bird and photographed it (Figs. 1–3). To obtain flight views, which might assist to differentiate what are two very similar species, Pacific *P. fulva* and American Golden Plovers *P. dominica*, we continued our approach. When the bird flushed we were inside the vehicle and failed to obtain sufficiently good views to establish whether the feet projected beyond the tail. Fortunately, we managed to relocate the bird nearby on a sandbar at the edge of the bay, where it had joined a second bird in similar plumage. We walked towards them, but they again flushed



Figures 1–3. Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*, Mussulo Bay, Luanda province, Angola, 18 February 2014 (Michael Mills & Nito Rocha)

Figuras 1–3. Tarambola-dourada-siberiana *Pluvialis fulva*, baía do Mussulo, província de Luanda, Angola, 18 fevereiro 2014 (Michael Mills & Nito Rocha) without permitting definitive views, although N. Rocha was reasonably confident that he had seen the feet projecting beyond the tail. Thereafter, we failed to relocate the birds.

Overall, the photographed bird had reasonably strong golden spotting on the upperparts and an extensive yellow-buff wash to the face (Figs. 1–3). The area immediately behind the eye was yellowish and the ear-coverts formed a dark post-ocular spot. It lacked a capped appearance and the supercilium was not very distinct. The wing projection beyond the tip of the tail was short. Although very hard to judge in the field without direct comparison, the legs and bill appeared proportionately long. All of these features indicate that the bird was a Pacific Golden Plover (Dunn *et al.* 1987, Johnson & Johnson 2004, Hockey *et al.* 2005), further supported by the probability that the feet projected beyond the tail. The second bird was less yellow / golden than the first, but I assume it was the same species. The third species in the group, European Golden Plover *P. apricaria*, has not been recorded in southern Africa or in West Africa south of Senegambia (Urban *et al.* 1986, Borrow & Demey 2014). This makes its occurrence in Angola highly improbable, and the possibility of the photographed bird being this species can be eliminated by (i) the unmarked malar area, which is streaked in *P. apricaria*, (ii) the bill being longer and heavier than in European Golden Plover, (iii) the more lightly streaked breast than in the latter species, (iv) the longer and paler legs than *apricaria*, and (v) the upperparts having coarser and sparser spotting than in European Golden Plover (K. Mullarney pers. comm.).

Pacific Golden Plover is a fairly common non-breeding migrant to coasts of north-east Africa, an uncommon migrant inland in East Africa and a rare vagrant to southern and West Africa (Urban *et al.* 1986, Hockey *et al.* 2005, Borrow & Demey 2014). Within southern Africa, it has been recorded mostly in South Africa, but also in Zimbabwe (Bulawayo) and Namibia (Swakopmund), and in West Africa there are records from coastal Gabon, Senegal, Ivory Coast and Ghana, and probable records from Togo and Nigeria. There are no previous records in Angola, although it was expected to occur during the austral summer (Dean 2000, Mills & Melo 2013).

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The following individuals assisted in the identification process by commenting on the photographs: Mark Boorman, Jenny Norman, Joakim Djerf, Pierre Defos du Rau, Paul Gaffan, Nik Borrow, Stephen Lowe, David Winter, Barry Wright, Hugh Gallagher, Clive Barlow and Nigel Redman. I am especially grateful to Killian Mullarney for his assistance in eliminating European Golden Plover. Ron Demey kindly commented on the manuscript and Martim Melo assisted with the Portuguese translations.

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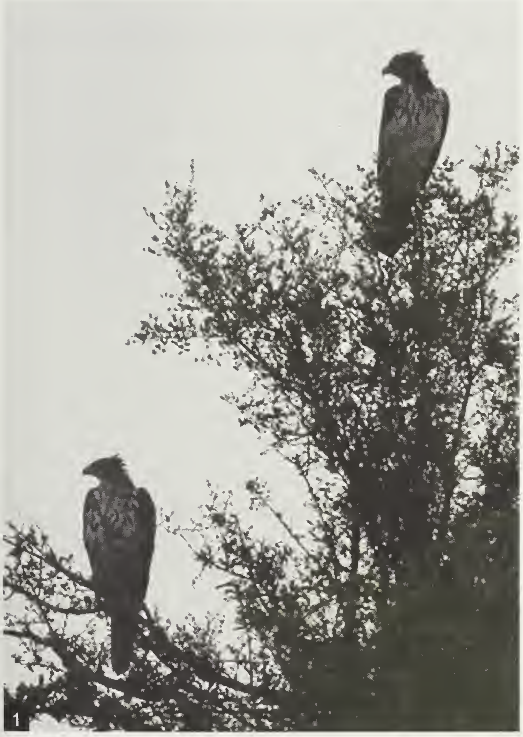
First records for Somalia of Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciata*, Short-toed Snake Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* and Red-breasted Wheatear *Oenanthe bottae*

Callan Cohen[a], *Michael S. L. Mills*[a] *and Julian Francis*[b]

Premières mentions pour la Somalie de l'Aigle de Bonelli *Aquila fasciata*, du Circaète Jean-le-blanc *Circaetus gallicus* et du Traquet à poitrine rousse *Oenanthe bottae*. À l'occasion d'une visite à la région autonome du Somaliland en mai 2010, trois espèces ont été observées pour la première fois en Somalie. Le 22 mai, un couple d'aigles a été photographié près de la Forêt de Daalo (à environ 10°43'53.8"N 47°17'49.2"E), dont la femelle était un Aigle de Bonelli *Aquila fasciata* et le mâle possédait des caractéristiques qui suggèrent qu'il s'agissait d'un Aigle fascié *A. spilogaster* ou d'un hybride *A. spilogaster* × *fasciata*. Le 28 mai, un Circaète Jean-le-Blanc *Circaetus gallicus* a été noté à Busti (10°16'41.5"N 45°04'0.1"E). Un Traquet à poitrine rousse *Oenanthe bottae* a été photographié le 19 mai près de Tog Wajaale (09°38'17.9"N 43°24'36.4"E).

We visited Somaliland, north-west Somalia, on 17–31 May 2010. Based on our visit, we have detailed numerous range extensions in Mills & Cohen (2015) and highlighted the endemic and range-restricted avifauna and birding potential of Somaliland (Cohen *et al.* 2011). Here we document three new country records for Somalia.

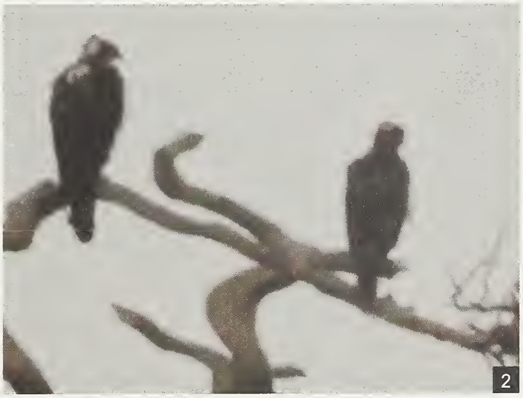


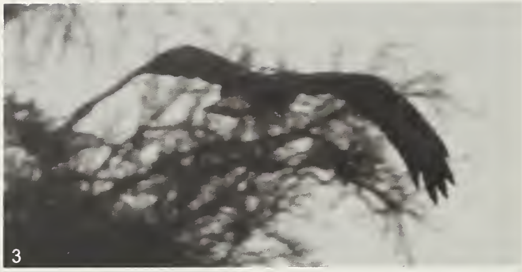
Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciata*

In the late afternoon of 22 May 2010 we observed a pair of eagles *Aquila* sp., either African Hawk Eagle *A. spilogaster* or Bonelli's Eagle *A. fasciata*, on a rocky slope just south of the entrance to Daalo Forest Reserve, at *c.*10°43'53.8"N 47°17'49.2"E. African Hawk Eagle is widespread in Somaliland (Ash & Miskell 1998) and similar in structure and plumage to Bonelli's Eagle (Brown *et al.* 1982, Kemp & Kemp 1998, Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001, Redman *et al.* 2009, Knobel 2012), which had not previously been recorded in Somalia (Ash & Miskell 1998). The female (as judged by her

Figures 1–2. Pair of eagles *Aquila* sp., near Daalo Forest, Somalia, 22 May 2010 (Callan Cohen & Michael Mills / www.birdingafrica.com)

Couple d'aigles *Aquila* sp., près de la Forêt de Daalo, Somalie, 22 mai 2010 (Callan Cohen & Michael Mills / www.birdingafrica.com)

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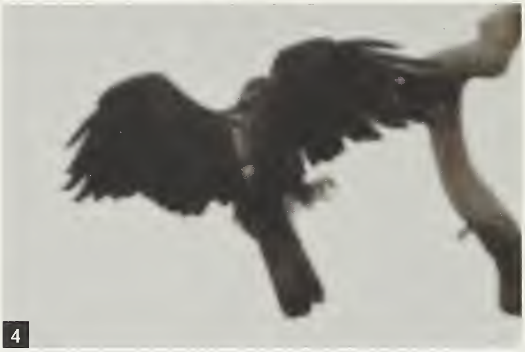
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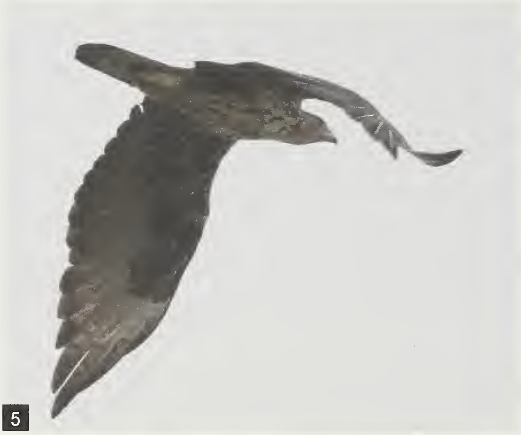
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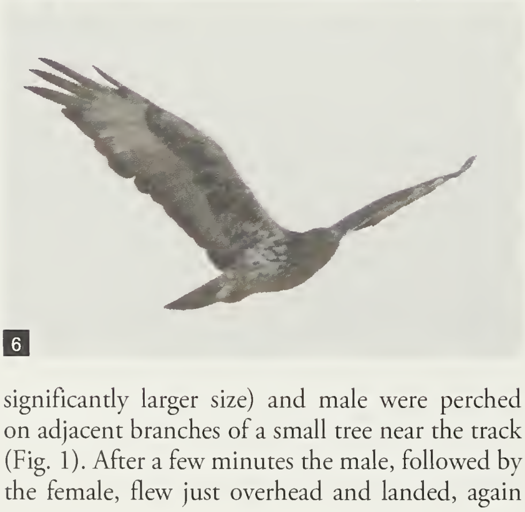
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Figures 3–5. Female Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciata*, near Daalo Forest, Somalia, 22 May 2010 (Callan Cohen & Michael Mills / www.birdingafrica.com)

Aigle de Bonelli *Aquila fasciata* femelle, près de la Forêt de Daalo, Somalie, 22 mai 2010 (Callan Cohen & Michael Mills / www.birdingafrica.com)

Figure 6. Male eagle *Aquila* sp., near Daalo Forest, Somalia, 22 May 2010 (Callan Cohen & Michael Mills / www.birdingafrica.com)

Aigle *Aquila* sp. mâle, près de la Forêt de Daalo, Somalie, 22 mai 2010 (Callan Cohen & Michael Mills / www.birdingafrica.com)

significantly larger size) and male were perched on adjacent branches of a small tree near the track (Fig. 1). After a few minutes the male, followed by the female, flew just overhead and landed, again adjacent to each other, in another tree (Fig. 2). The heavily streaked underparts, dark subterminal tail-band and broad, dark trailing edge to the wing identified both as adults (Forsman 1999, Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001, Redman *et al.* 2009). The female was clearly identified as a Bonelli's Eagle and distinguished from African Hawk Eagle (AHE) on the basis of the following characters (Brown *et al.* 1982, Beaman & Madge 1998, Clark 1999, Forsman 1999, Svensson *et al.* 1999, Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001, Redman *et al.* 2009, Knobel 2012): (1) a large white patch on the back, as shown in Figs. 2–4 (not present in AHE); (2) very faint darker barring on the grey tail above the dark terminal tail-band, as shown in Figs. 3–4 (this barring is more distinct in AHE); (3) primary bases that contrasted only slightly with the primary tips when viewed from above (see Figs. 3–4; primary bases contrast strongly in AHE, creating pale 'windows' on the upperwing); (4) distinctly medium brown face (Fig. 5; black in AHE); (5) dark trousers that showed as a dark patch on the rear flanks in flight (Fig. 5; AHE has pale trousers); and (6) mid-grey remiges with a faint trailing edge to the wing (Fig. 5; AHW has white or very pale grey remiges, with a strongly contrasting dark trailing edge).

The male was very similar in plumage to the female, but was not observed from behind in flight. As illustrated by our photographs, it differed in two important respects from the female, both of which suggest African Hawk Eagle: when perched, no white patch was visible on the back (Fig. 2) and remiges were distinctly paler grey than those of the female, with a very distinct trailing edge to the wing (Fig. 6). According to D. Forsman (*in litt.* 2010), the combination of adult underparts (clean white below with fine black streaking) and

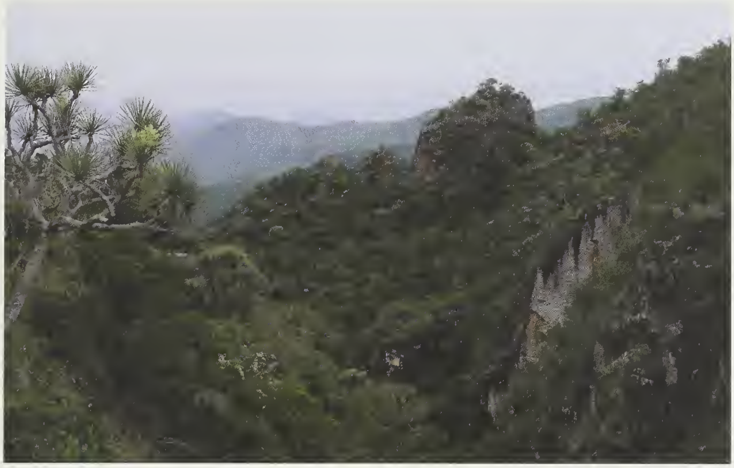


Figure 7. Daalo is a mountainous area at *c*.2,000 m altitude comprising precipitous limestone cliffs, rocky scrublands and relict *Juniperus procera* forests, suitable habitat for Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciata* (Callan Cohen & Michael Mills / www.birdingafrica.com)

Daalo est une zone montagneuse à environ 2.000 m d'altitude, avec des falaises calcaires, des parties broussailleuses et rocheuses et des forêts de *Juniperus procera* – un habitat approprié pour l'Aigle de Bonelli *Aquila fasciata* (Callan Cohen & Michael Mills / www.birdingafrica.com)

bold trailing edge to the wing is never present in Bonelli's Eagle.

However, a number of features not typical of African Hawk Eagle are shown by this bird, raising the possibility that it might be a hybrid: the remiges, especially the secondaries, were distinctly barred, as seen in Fig. 6 (unbarred or faintly barred in AHE); a brown patch was visible on the rear flanks (not present in AHE); and the face was medium brown (not black as in AHE).

The occurrence of Bonelli's Eagle at Daalo Forest Reserve, a mountainous area *c*.2,000 m above sea level and comprising precipitous limestone cliffs, rocky scrublands and relict *Juniperus procera* forests (Fig. 7), is perhaps not surprising as the species has been discovered breeding in similar habitat in Forêt du Day in Djibouti (Welch & Welch 1984, Redman *et al.* 2009), <300 km distant. Bonelli's Eagle also occurs in mountainous habitat on the north side of the Red Sea in Yemen (Porter & Aspinall 2010).

Short-toed Snake Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*

On 28 May we photographed a Short-toed Snake Eagle in typical plumage, soaring over the edge of rocky hills near Busti at 10°16'41.5"N 45°04'0.1"E (Fig. 8). The heavily barred and spotted underwing-coverts eliminate Beaudouin's Snake Eagle *C. beaudouini*, Brown Snake Eagle *C. cinereus* and adult Black-chested Snake Eagle *C. pectoralis* (Clark 2000). Second-plumage (subadult) Black-chested Snake Eagle, which can sometimes show this pattern on the underwing-coverts, should have retained the dark juvenile secondaries (Clark 2000), which this bird did not. Although Short-toed Snake Eagle is a common Palearctic migrant to Ethiopia, this record is nonetheless surprising as the species is very rare east of the Rift Valley, and there are just two May records in Ethiopia (Ash & Atkins 2009). Short-toed Snake Eagle has subsequently been recorded in Somaliland at Daalo, on 16–17 September 2010, and on the Ban Cade Plains, on 18 September 2010 (N. Borrow *in Bull. ABC* 18: 104; *in litt.* 2010).

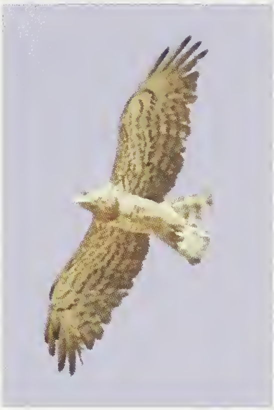
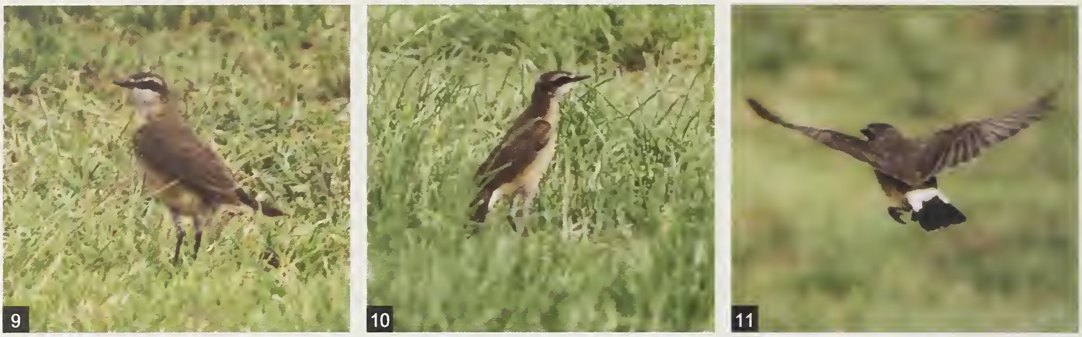


Figure 8. Short-toed Snake Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*, near Busti, Somalia, 28 May 2010 (Callan Cohen & Michael Mills / www.birdingafrica.com)

Circaète Jean-le-Blanc *Circaetus gallicus*, près de Busti, Somalie, 28 mai 2010 (Callan Cohen & Michael Mills / www.birdingafrica.com)

Red-breasted Wheatear *Oenanthe bottae*

On 19 May we photographed one on the plains just west of Tog Wajaale at 09°38'17.9"N 43°24'36.4"E. It was identified by its clear white throat and upper breast, contrasting with the orange-rufous underparts (palest in the centre and richest on the breast-sides), black face and white supercilium extending to just behind the eye (Figs. 9–10). The upperparts and wing were



Figures 9–11. Red-breasted Wheatear *Oenanthe bottae*, near Tog Wajaale, Somalia, 19 May 2010 (Callan Cohen & Michael Mills / www.birdingafrica.com)

Traquet à poitrine rousse *Oenanthe bottae*, près de Tog Wajaale, Somalie, 19 mai 2010 (Callan Cohen & Michael Mills / www.birdingafrica.com)

mid-brown, and the outer tail feathers were black over the distal half, with the black on the inner rectrices extending towards the tail base, creating an inverted 'T' shape (Fig. 11). This combination of features eliminates all other species (Redman *et al.* 2009, Porter & Aspinall 2010). Red-breasted Wheatear is known from the Ethiopian highlands to the west, and Yemen to the north (Ash & Atkins 2009, Porter & Aspinall 2010).

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First record of Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* for St. Helena, South Atlantic

Annalea Beard

Première mention du Phalarope à bec large *Phalaropus fulicarius* pour l'île de Sainte-Hélène, Atlantique Sud. Le 31 janvier 2015, un Phalarope à bec large *Phalaropus fulicarius* a été photographié en vol dans la baie de James, Sainte-Hélène. Il s'agit de la première donnée pour l'île. L'espèce hiverne en grand nombre au large de l'Afrique de l'ouest et du sud-ouest ; l'oiseau est probablement arrivé à Sainte-Hélène grâce aux vents soufflant du sud-est.

On the morning of 31 January 2015, while on board the *RMS St. Helena* anchored in James Bay, St. Helena (15°55'100"S 05°43'250"W), fellow passengers Mike & Sue Morrison were observing Madeiran Storm-petrels *Oceanodroma castro* surface-feeding, when they noticed a different bird, which only stayed briefly until the ship started to move out of the bay. It was a small wader with mainly pale grey upperparts, white underparts, a long, white wingbar, a mainly white head with a small darkish eye patch and a shortish, blunt-tipped straight bill (Figs. 1–2). After his voyage, Mike Morrison contacted the Marine Section of the Environmental and Natural Resources Directorate of the St. Helena government.

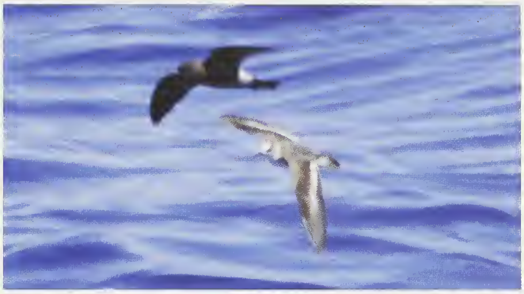

Figure 1. Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* with Madeiran Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma castro*, James Bay, St. Helena, 31 January 2015 (Mike Morrison)

Phalarope à bec large *Phalaropus fulicarius* avec Océanite de Castro *Oceanodroma castro*, baie de James, Sainte-Hélène, 31 janvier 2015 (Mike Morrison)

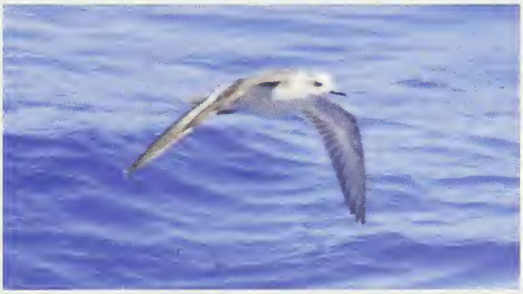

Figure 2. Red Phalarope / Phalarope à bec large *Phalaropus fulicarius*, James Bay, St. Helena, 31 January 2015 (Mike Morrison)

On inspection of the photographs, the bird was identified as an adult Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* in non-breeding plumage (Harrison 1983). Dr M. Bolton and Dr S. Oppel of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, UK (*in litt.* 2015) confirmed the identification. B. Rowlands (pers. comm.), who maintains the St. Helena bird list, stated that this is the first report from the island.

Red Phalaropes breed near Arctic coasts and migrate almost exclusively via marine routes to winter in large numbers off western and south-western Africa, and western South America (van Gils & Wiersma 1996). Migrants arrive at their non-breeding quarters off south-western Africa from October, with numbers peaking in December, and remain until March, rarely April (Hockey *et al.* 2005). It therefore seems probable that this bird reached St. Helena on the south-east trade winds, which are probably the major factor responsible for the relatively frequent arrival on the island of vagrant wader species typical of the African–Palearctic flyway (*cf.* Rowlands *et al.* 2004).

Acknowledgements

Grateful thanks to Mike & Sue Morrison for bringing the bird to our attention. Thanks also to Dr Mark Bolton and Dr Steffen Oppel for confirming the identification. Beau Rowlands is thanked for reviewing

an earlier version of the manuscript. Neil McCulloch commented on the submitted draft.

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Photospot:
Juvenile Spot-breasted Lapwing *Vanellus melanocephalus*

Ron Demey[a] *and Rich Andrews*[b]

Première photo d'un Vanneau d'Abyssinie *Vanellus melanocephalus* juvénile. Le Vanneau d'Abyssinie *Vanellus melanocephalus* est endémique à l'Éthiopie, où il fréquente les prairies et landes à 1.800–4.200 m d'altitude. Étant localement fréquent à commun et relativement facile à observer, il est remarquable que son écologie demeure largement inconnue. Seulement un nid, trouvé en avril 1970, a été décrit, tandis que son régime alimentaire et même son plumage juvénile ne sont pas documentés du tout. Une photo d'un juvénile, prise en décembre 2014 sur le plateau de Sanetti, est présentée ici. Au même endroit, des adultes semblaient en train de prendre des petits graviers, probablement utiles au broyage de certains éléments de nourriture – un comportement qui n'avait apparemment pas encore été signalé pour l'espèce.

Spot-breasted Lapwing *Vanellus melanocephalus* is endemic to Ethiopia, where it occurs in highland grassland and moorland at 1,800–4,200 m, although mainly above 3,000 m (Keith 1988). It ranges from the Simien Mountains in the north to the Bale Mountains in the south; the latter being a stronghold where >50 pairs have been found breeding (Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society 2001, Ash & Atkins 2009). Although its population, roughly estimated at <10,000 individuals, is relatively small and its range restricted, the species is not considered to be threatened (BirdLife International 2015). It is locally frequent to common and easily observed.

It is therefore all the more remarkable that so little is known about the species' ecology. Only one nest has ever been described. Found in the Bale Mountains at 4,200 m on 25 April 1970

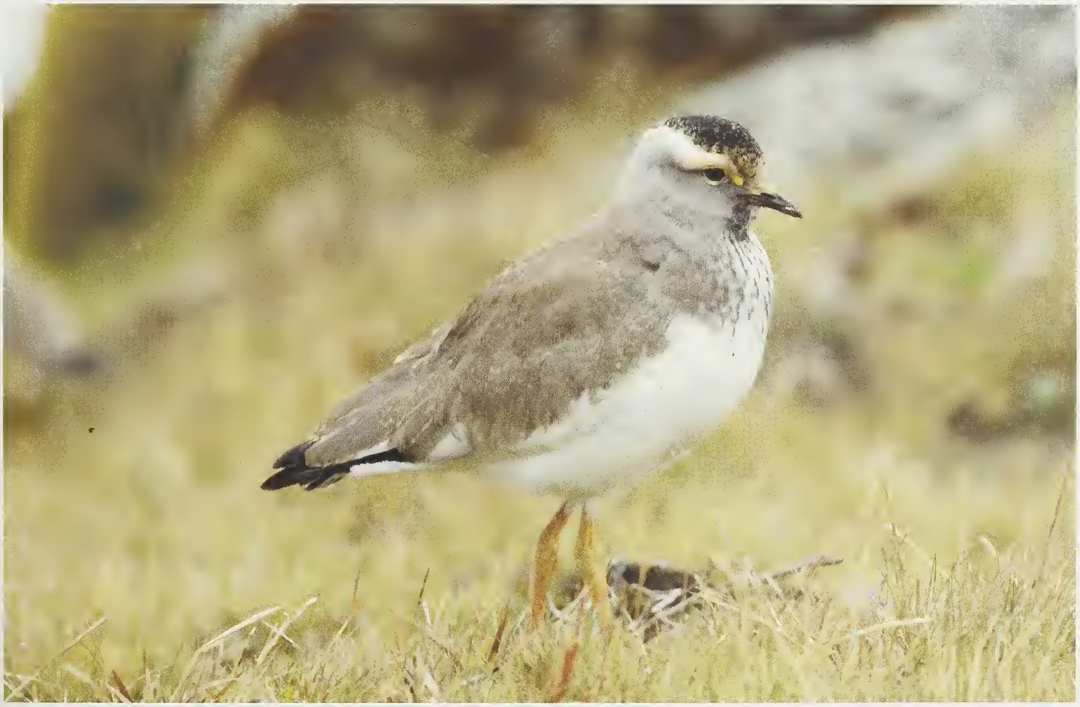

Figure 1. Juvenile Spot-breasted Lapwing *Vanellus melanocephalus*, Sanetti Plateau, Ethiopia, 1 December 2014 (Rich Andrews)

Vanneau d'Abyssinie *Vanellus melanocephalus* juvénile, Plateau de Sanetti, Éthiopie, 1er décembre 2014 (Rich Andrews)

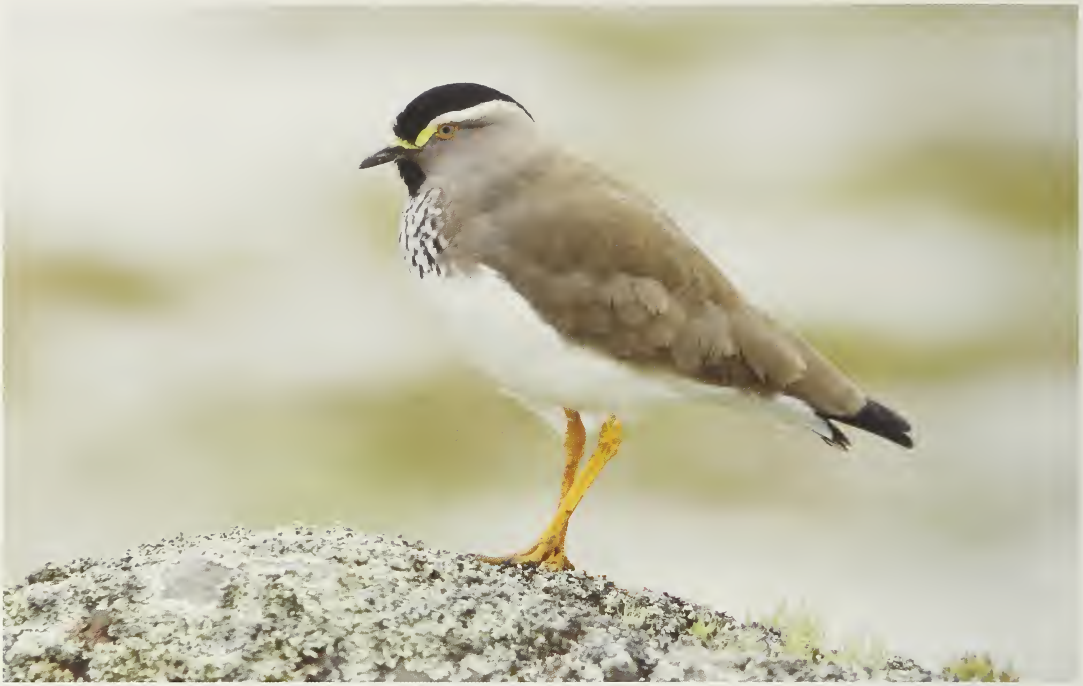

Figure 2. Adult Spot-breasted Lapwing *Vanellus melanocephalus*, Sanetti Plateau, Ethiopia, 1 December 2014 (Rich Andrews)

Vanneau d'Abyssinie *Vanellus melanocephalus* adulte, Plateau de Sanetti, Éthiopie, 1er décembre 2014 (Rich Andrews)

(not 1972, as erroneously stated in Hayman *et al.* 1986), it consisted of a shallow scrape and contained four eggs (Urban *et al.* 1970). The only other breeding report is from August, in Shoa district (Moltoni & Ruscone 1940–44 *in* Urban & Brown 1971). The lapwing's diet remains undescribed and, curiously, even its juvenile plumage (Keith 1988, Wiersma 1996, Redman *et al.* 2009), while an internet search has not revealed any photographs of young birds.

In December 2014, RA observed a group of Spot-breasted Lapwings on the Sanetti Plateau, in Bale Mountains National Park, and photographed a juvenile (Fig. 1). Compared to the crisp plumage of the adult (Fig. 2), it is conspicuously duller. The crown and throat appear dusky, as the black feathers are tipped white or buffish. The white supercilium is broader and not sharply delimited. The grey-brown upperpart feathers have narrow pale fringes. The upper breast is narrowly streaked grey-brown, whereas the adult's is more boldly marked with greyish-black streaks and spots. The small, oval, lemon-yellow wattle in front of the eye is already present, but the narrow orbital ring is lemon-yellow, whereas it is deep yellow to orange in the adult. The legs, which are deep yellow in the adult, are a duller, paler yellow. These features indicate that the bird was a relatively recently fledged juvenile. Combined with the only known breeding reports, this suggests that the species has a very protracted or variable breeding season, which would not generally be expected for a plover with a restricted range occurring at high elevations (T. Prater *in litt.* 2015).

While photographing the Spot-breasted Lapwings, RA noticed that some appeared to be taking grit from the road (Fig. 3); at 07.30 hrs it was cold (3°C) and no evidence of insects was visible. Although plovers (Charadriidae) are known to occasionally take grit, probably to grind ingested nutritious food items (Piersma 1996), this has apparently not been described previously for this species.

Acknowledgements

We thank Tony Prater and Nik Borrow for their useful comments on the manuscript.

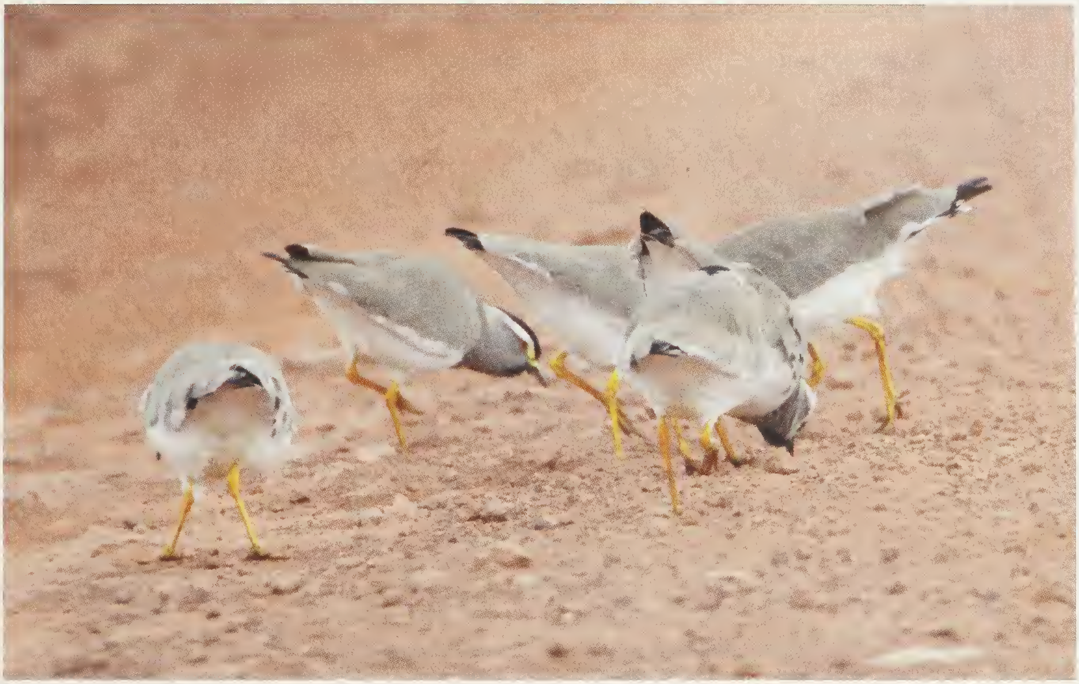

Figure 3. Spot-breasted Lapwings *Vanellus melanocephalus* apparently taking grit, Sanetti Plateau, Ethiopia, 1 December 2014 (Rich Andrews)

Vanneaux d'Abyssinie *Vanellus melanocephalus* apparemment en train d'avaler des petits graviers, Plateau de Sanetti, Éthiopie, 1er décembre 2014 (Rich Andrews)

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Photospot:
Aberrant Grey-backed Camaroptera *Camaroptera brachyura* in Cameroon

Christer G. Wiklund

Observation d'une Camaroptère à tête grise *Camaroptera brachyura* au plumage aberrant. La Camaroptère à tête grise *Camaroptera brachyura* est une espèce commune et répandue en Afrique subsaharienne. Le 26 juillet 2012, un individu au plumage aberrant a été capturé près de Wum, Région du Nord-Ouest, Cameroun. Cet oiseau avait la tête, la nuque, le croupion, la poitrine et le ventre blanchâtres et les ailes brunes, mais possédait un bec et un iris de couleur normale. Cette aberration est probablement causée par le « grisonnement progressif » et par l'absence de caroténoïdes jaunes, qui, avec les mélanines, produisent la coloration verte.

Grey-backed Camaroptera *Camaroptera brachyura* is common and widespread in sub-Saharan Africa (Urban *et al.* 1997, Ryan 2006). Sixteen or seventeen subspecies are recognised, which are generally divided into the green-backed 'nominate group' and grey-backed '*brevicaudata* group', and sometimes treated as separate species, Green-backed Camaroptera *C. brachyura* and Grey-backed Camaroptera *C. brevicaudata* (Ryan 2006, Dickinson & Christidis 2014). In Cameroon, as over the rest of western Africa, there are two races, the forest zone form *tincta* and the paler savanna form *brevicaudata* (Borrow & Demey 2014). Grey-backed Camaroptera has a dark grey head, neck and back, a paler grey breast, fading to whitish on the central belly (Fig. 1). The short wings are green and the tail is brown. The tibial feathers are orangey. The legs are pinkish, the eyes brown and the bill black. *C. b. brevicaudata* assumes a non-breeding, mainly ashy-brown, plumage in the dry season (Borrow & Demey 2014).

On 26 July 2012, I mist-netted a small, conspicuously coloured passerine near Wum, *c.*47 km north of Bamenda, North-west Region, Cameroon (06°24'01"N 10° 03'36"E), in an area dominated by cornfields, small stands of trees and bushes, and a patch of elephant grass *Pennisetum purpureum*. The bird was white or whitish on the head, neck, rump, breast and belly, and the short wings were brown (Fig. 2). The tail was short and brown, the eyes pale brown, the bill black, the legs were pinkish and the tibial feathers orangey. The shape and colour of the bare parts, as well as the shape of the wing and tail, and the colour of the tail and thigh feathers, suggest the bird was an aberrant-coloured Grey-backed Camaroptera.

Whitish plumage parts may be due to, e.g., leucism, i.e. the partial or total lack of melanins in feathers and skin, or progressive greying, i.e. the progressive loss of pigment cells with age (van Grouw 2013). In birds, both types of colour aberration have in common that the eyes are always normally coloured. In the early stages of progressive greying, white feathers spread randomly, often on the head and flanks, while the bill and feet retain normal colours (van Grouw 2013). Partially leucistic birds can also have a normally coloured bill and feet, depending on where the colourless patches occur (H. van Grouw *in litt.* 2015). The Wum bird has a normally coloured bill, surrounded by white feathers extending over the head, neck and breast. A leucistic bird with this pattern of white feathering would probably have had a colourless bill (H. van Grouw *in litt.* 2015). Therefore, this individual is almost certainly an example of progressive greying. The bird also has another type of pigment deficiency: it lacks the green coloration of the upperwing-coverts and the upper side of the primaries, which is characteristic of normal-coloured individuals of this species. This is due to the lack of yellow carotenoids, which together with melanins produce the green colour (S. Andersson *in litt.* 2015). Carotenoids cannot be synthesised by birds and must therefore be acquired from food. Causes for the absence of carotenoid in the plumage are genetic mutations (very rare), absence of carotenoids in food (unlikely) or the inability to process the carotenoids into colour due to a physical disorder (Prager *et al.* 2009; H. van Grouw *in litt.* 2015). A combination of these causes has been observed in, e.g., Yellow-mantled Widowbird

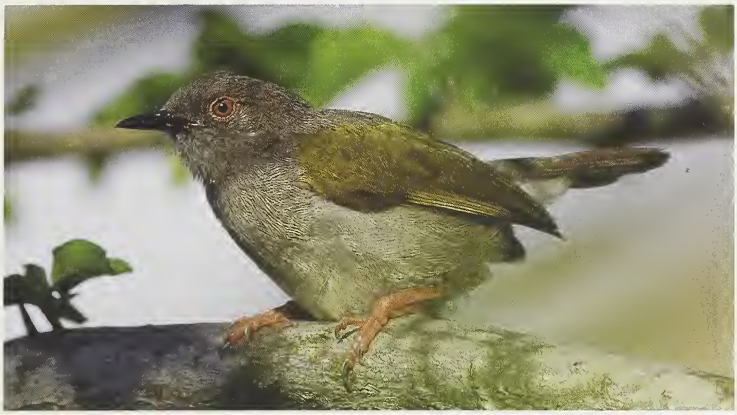

Figure 1. Grey-backed Camaroptera *Camaroptera brevicaudata tincta* with normal-coloured plumage, Douala, Cameroon, 15 September 2012 (Bernard Guévorts)

Camaroptère à tête grise *Camaroptera brachyura* au plumage normal, Douala, Cameroun, 15 septembre 2012 (Bernard Guévorts)

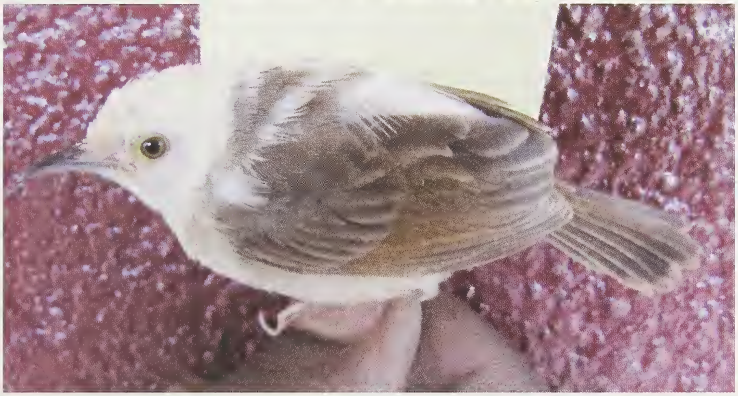

Figure 2. Grey-backed Camaroptera *Camaroptera brachyura* with aberrant plumage caused by progressive greying and a lack of yellow carotenoids, Wum, Cameroon, 26 July 2012 (Christer G. Wiklund)

Camaroptère à tête grise *Camaroptera brachyura* au plumage aberrant lié à une condition appelée « grisonnement progressif » et à l'absence de caroténoïdes jaunes, Wum, Cameroun, 26 juillet 2012 (Christer G. Wiklund)

Euplectes macrourus (Andersson *et al.* 2007). To my knowledge, this is the first observation of these two types of colour aberrations in a Grey-backed Camaroptera.

Acknowledgements

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Recent Reports

These are largely unconfirmed records published for interest only; **records are mostly from late 2014 and early 2015, with a few from earlier dates**. We thank all birders who have sent in their records and urge them to submit full details to the relevant national or regional organisations. It is suggested that observations of each species be compared with relevant literature to set new data in context and that observers who are unfamiliar with the status of birds in a particular country refer to the ABC country checklists (www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/checklists/index.html) or more recent or appropriate sources before submitting records.

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Les observations ci-après sont en majeure partie non confirmées et sont publiées uniquement dans le but d'informer. **La plupart des données sont de fin 2014 et début 2015 ; quelques-unes sont plus anciennes**. Nous remercions tous les ornithologues qui ont pris la peine de nous faire parvenir leurs données et nous recommandons de les envoyer, dûment documentées, aux organisations nationales ou régionales concernées. Il est conseillé de vérifier le statut des espèces observées dans la littérature appropriée, afin de mettre les nouvelles données en perspective, et de consulter notamment les 'checklists' des pays africains du ABC (www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/checklists/index.html) ou des sources plus récentes ou appropriées.

Azores

In the period December 2014–May 2015 the following were reported. A **Barnacle Goose** *Branta leucopsis* was on Flores on 31 January, with two on Corvo on 9 February. The **Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps* at Lagoa Azul, São Miguel, stayed until at least mid February. A **Double-crested Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax auritus* was located on Terceira on 14 December. A first-winter **Green Heron** *Butorides virescens* at Sete Cidades, São Miguel, remained from late January until at least late February. An immature **American Purple Gallinule** *Porphyrio martinicus* was present at Conceição, Faial, on 16–20 February and an **American Coot** *Fulica americana* at Lagoa Azul, São Miguel, from at least 25 January to 6 February. A **Northern Harrier** *Circus cyaneus hudsonicus* was observed on Terceira on at least 7 December. **Red-footed Falcons** *Falco vespertinus*, the eight and ninth for the Azores, were observed on 19 May.

Up to seven **Semipalmated Plovers** *Charadrius semipalmatus* were at Cabo da Praia, Terceira, from late January until at least 16 February. The **Willet** *Tringa semipalmata* at Ponta Delgado, first seen on 23 September, was still present in late January. Up to two **Hudsonian Whimbrels** *Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus* stayed at Cabo da Praia until at least 17 March, with one on Faial until at least 13 April. A first-winter **Short-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus griseus* was still at Cabo da Praia in May. On Santa Maria, three **Wilson's Snipes** *Gallinago delicata* were found at Lagoa do Ginjal on 11 February. Single **Spotted Sandpipers** *Actitis macularius* were located on Pico on 22 February and on Faial on 13 April. Twenty-two **Ring-billed Gulls** *Larus delawarensis* were counted at Lajes airfield, Terceira, on 16 February. A **Northern Flicker** *Colaptes auratus* was seen again at the Pedro Miguel Botanical Garden on Faial on 26 February (per *Dutch Birding* 37: 42–53, 122–129, 193, 200).

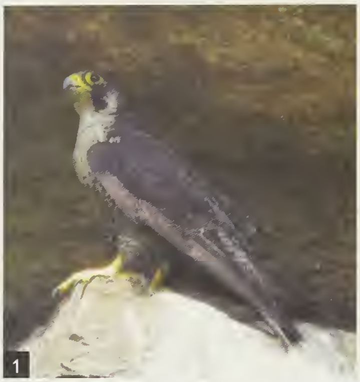
Benin

Nearly three months of field work covering most of the country from the coast to the north-east (but not the north-west), in March–May 2015, produced the following records of interest. **White-backed Night Heron** *Gorsachius leuconotus* was observed in 'W' National Park (=NP; Mékrou River), Alibori River (Alibori) and Ouémé River (Bétékoukou), all range extensions from Pendjari NP, where the species was found in 2010 (*Bull. ABC* 17: 240). **Red-chested Flufftail** *Sarothrura rufa* was heard (territorial song *kuah-kuah-kuah*...) and reacted to playback in three permanent marshes, near Aplahoué (Gbakpodji), Monoto (lower Mono River) and Okpara Dam (Parakou); this is a new species for the country. An **African Finfoot** *Podica senegalensis* was seen feeding on dry land, under riparian thickets, next to the nearly dry Alibori River in 'W' NP (16 May). In the same park, **Savile's Bustards** *Lophotis savilei* were observed (15–16 May); there is only one previous Benin record (*Bull. ABC* 18: 150), but they appear common at this site. A pair of **Rock Pratincoles** *Glareola nuchalis* was seen on the Ouémé River (Bétékoukou, 25 March) for the first time. Guineo-Congolian forest remnants in Pénessoulou Forest Reserve (=FR), at 09°15'N, apparently hold the northernmost populations of several forest species, including **Ahanta Francolin** *Pternistis ahantensis*, **Black-throated Coucal** *Centropus leucogaster*, **Yellowbill** *Ceuthmochares* *aereus*, **Blue-throated Roller** *Eurystomus gularis*, **Baumann's Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus baumanni*, **Grey-headed Bristlebill** *Bleda canicapillus*, **Western Nicator** *Nicator chloris*, **Forest Robin** *Stiphrornis erythrothorax* and **Puvel's Illadopsis** *Illadopsis puveli*. **Mottled Swifts** *Tachymarptis aequatorialis* migrated over Kouandé hill late on 10 May, still calling into the night. A **Standard-winged Nightjar** *Caprimulgus longipennis* was still in full display in 'W' NP on 16–17 May. **Plain Nightjars** *C. inornatus* were still singing in the north-east (Gbérouboué, Sota FR and 'W'NP) on 16–21 May. **White-throated Bee-eaters** *Merops albicollis* started crossing the north-east in mid May, including many feeding in 'W' NP after the first rains on 16 May. A **Wahlberg's Honeybird** *Prodotiscus regulus* watched at close range in short-stature woodland in Sota FR (10°59'N) on 21 May represents another first for the country. A **Least Honeyguide** *Indicator exilis* was sound-recorded in Lama FR on 24 May, confirming previous observations from Lama and Niaouli FR. The poorly known **Golden-tailed Woodpecker** *Campethera abingoni* was heard on the upper Mékrou at Gbéba and upper Alibori near Tobré, both north of 10°N. **Sun Lark** *Galerida modesta* was found in short grassland on Banté hill, apparently at its southern range limit. Several **Fanti Saw-wings** *Psalidoprocne obscura* were prospecting potential nest sites in low cliffs of red earth in Sota FR on 20–21 May. **Leaflove** *Phyllastrephus scandens* seems to reach its northern limit on the upper Mékrou at Gbéba, at 10°15'N, and **Tropical Boubou** *Laniarius aethiopicus* on the Bouli River, in Trois Rivières FR, at 10°26'N. **Baumann's Greenbul**, first discovered in 2009 at Lama FR, was found to be widespread, including on the Ouémé River (Bétékoukou), Okpara River (on the Nigerian border) north and south of 8°N, and in Bassila FR, north to Pénessoulou. **Rufous Scrub Robins** *Cercotrichas galactotes* were in full song in dry thickets in 'W' NP on 15–16 May. **Dorst's Cisticola** *Cisticola guinea* was located only in Sota FR (10°59'N) on 21 May, whereas **Rufous Cisticola** *C. rufus* was widespread in woodland, from Monts Kouffé and the Okpara River, north of 8°N, to Sota FR at 11°04'N. **Rock-loving Cisticola** *C. aberrans* appears to reach its southern range limit on Savalou hill. An **Ashy Flycatcher** *Muscicapa caerulescens* was singing as far north as the Bouli River (10°26'N, Trois Rivières FR), on 22–23 May, whilst a **White-browed Forest Flycatcher** *Fraseria cinerascens* was found in riparian forest on 11 April on the Okpara River at Igbodja—only its second locality in Benin. A group of **Capuchin Babblers** *Phyllanthus atripennis* was observed in Ouémé-Boukou FR, Bétékoukou, on 26 March—yet another first for the country. **Yellow Penduline Tit** *Anthoscopus parvulus* was found to be locally common in woodland, from Toui-Kilibo FR north to Sota FR, being especially numerous in Ouémé Supérieur FR (Affon). **Brown Sunbird** *Anthreptes gabonicus* was discovered inland on rivers, including the Okpara (at Igbodja) and the Ouémé (at Bétérou), feeding on nectar of *Syzygium guineense* flowers. **Brown-rumped Bunting** *Emberiza affinis* was found only in the far north, e.g. in Sota FR and 'W' NP, where it was common.

The most noteworthy Palearctic species included a late **Little Bittern** *Ixobrychus minutus* on the Alibori River (at Alibori) on 19 May; an immature **Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* in 'W' NP on 16 May; a heavy passage of **Red-footed Falcons** *Falco verspertinus* near Djougou, Kopargo, on 10 May, with *c*.80 feeding on flying ants, and north of Péhonko on 12 May, where *c*.100 flew west-northwest, with a few also near Kouandé on 11 May; three single **Common Cuckoos** *Cuculus canorus* during 22 March–14 April; *c*.50 **Pallid Swifts** *Apus pallidus* at Togbin, on the coast, on 9 March, with a few over Banté on 28 March; **Common Swifts** *A. apus* still passing in large numbers between Savalou and Kouandé on 10 May, and in smaller numbers later in the north, until at least 23 May (two over the Bouli River); a heavy passage of **European Bee-eaters** *Merops apiaster* throughout the centre-north from March until 19 April; a **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater** *M. persicus* at Bétékoukou on 26 March; a late **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* (female, apparently *thunbergi*) on the Alibori River, in'W' NP, on 16 May; a late **Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra* near Kouandé on 11 May; a late **Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* on the Sota River on 20 May; several **Melodious Warblers** *Hippolais polyglotta* (some calling, none singing) on 11–12 May near Kouandé and Gbéba (upper Mékrou), and one on the Alibori River on 19 May; and several late **Spotted Flycatchers** *Muscicapa striata* on 10–11 May, from Kopargo to Kouandé (*FD-L & RJD*).

Botswana

The second **Red-necked Buzzard** *Buteo auguralis* for the country, and the sixth for southern Africa, was an adult photographed near Kasane Forest Reserve, in the north, on 2 January; the first was a juvenile in Chobe National Park on 11 July 2014 (*Bull. ABC* 22: 98). Single **European Honey Buzzards** *Pernis apivorus* were reported from Maun on 20 February and Crocodile Pools, near Gabarone, on 14 March. A male **South African Shelduck** *Tadorna cana* was located on the Makgadikgadi Pans in early January—a rather unusual record for this area. Following rains in early April, at least eight **Knob-billed Ducks** *Sarkidiornis melanotos* were seen at Mpaythutlwa Pan, in Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, whilst several **Red-billed Teals** *Anas erythrorhyncha* were at Letsoloago Pan. A **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* was foraging at a waterhole in Moremi Game Reserve on 28–29 January. A **European Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* was ringed at Maun Letaka Manor on 25 January (and re-trapped on 1 February), with another mist-netted at Lake Ngami on 28 January (per *TH & AR*).



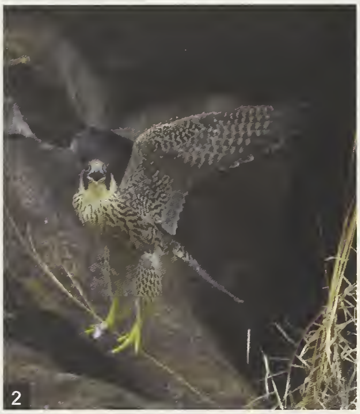


Figure 1. Adult Peregrine Falcon / Faucon pèlerin *Falco peregrinus*, Yaoundé, Cameroon, 9 March 2015 (Roger Fotso)

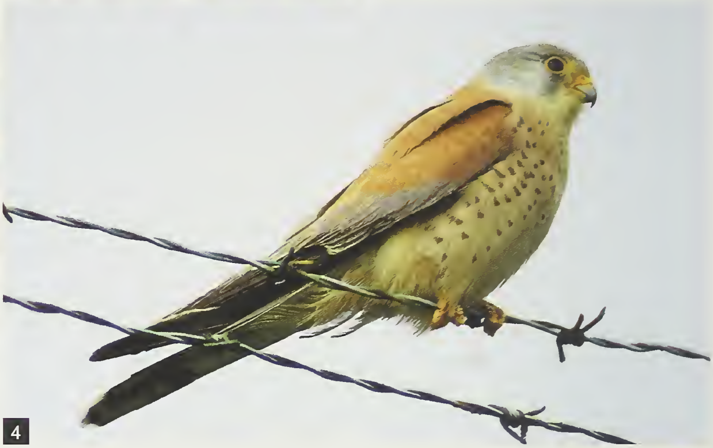
Figure 2. Juvenile Peregrine Falcon / Faucon pèlerin *Falco peregrinus*, Yaoundé, Cameroon, 9 March 2015 (Roger Fotso)

Cameroon

A **Brown Noddy** *Anous stolidus* was seen at Kribi on 3 May 2015, after a night of strong winds; this is apparently the fourth record for the country and the first in more than 60 years, although the species is probably more regular than these few records suggest (*PSc* per *ML*). The pair of **Peregrine Falcons** *Falco peregrinus*, discovered in an abandoned quarry in Yaoundé on 30 August 2014 (*Bull. ABC* 22: 99), was feeding two almost full-grown young on 11 February; on 9 March they were flying around the site (Figs. 1–2; *RF*).

Canary Islands

Records from December 2014–May 2015 include the following. On Tenerife, an adult **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* was observed at Tejina-Valle de Guerra on 19 May (Fig. 3; *RBa & ES*) and an adult **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* at Tejina-Bajamar on 29 April, with an immature at the same pond on 19 May (*RBa, JV & ES*). At Los Rodeos airport, at least four **Lesser Kestrels** *Falco naumanni* (two adult males, an immature male and an adult female) stayed on 9–22 April (Figs. 4–5; *VC, RL, JV, MF, RBa & BRo*). An influx of **Red-footed Falcons** *F. vespertinus*



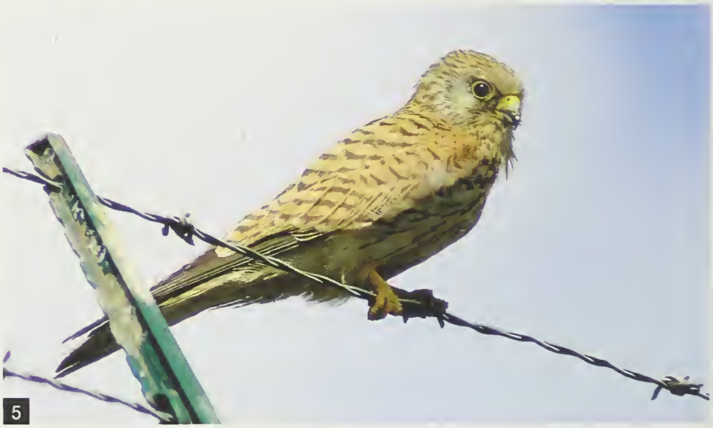
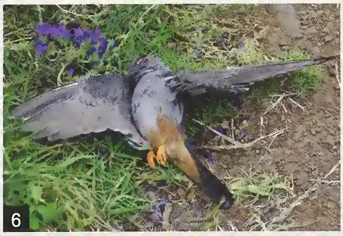


Figure 3. Adult Squacco Heron / Crabier chevelu *Ardeola ralloides*, Tejina-Valle de Guerra, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 19 May 2015 (Rubén Barone)

Figure 4. Adult male Lesser Kestrel / Faucon crécerellette *Falco naumanni*, Los Rodeos, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 13 April 2015 (Rubén Barone)

Figure 5. Adult female Lesser Kestrel / Faucon crécerellette *Falco naumanni*, Los Rodeos, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 13 April 2015 (Rubén Barone)



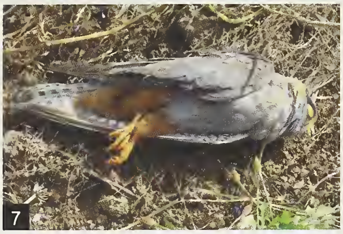


Figure 6. Adult male Red-footed Falcon / Faucon kobez *Falco vespertinus*, Los Rodeos, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 18 May 2015 (Rubén Barone)

Figure 7. Immature male Red-footed Falcon / Faucon kobez *Falco vespertinus*, Los Rodeos, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 21 May 2015 (Rubén Barone)

occurred in May, with *c.*40 at Los Rodeos on 17th (*c.*30 the previous day), but sadly *c.*20 died, mainly due to collisions with aeroplanes, despite efforts by the airport personnel to avoid this; the last record was of three on 25th (Figs. 6–7; *AA, FCr, RBa, JV, VC & ES*). Also at Los Rodeos, an adult **Eurasian Hobby** *F. subbuteo* was seen on 17 and 21 May (*AA & RBa*), up to three adult **Collared Pratincoles** *Glareola pratincola* on 16–21 May (*AA, RBa & JV*), a **Red-rumped Swallow** *Cecropis daurica* on 13 April (*BRo & RBa*) and a **Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra* on 18 May (*TBa & JV*; *all* per *RBa*).

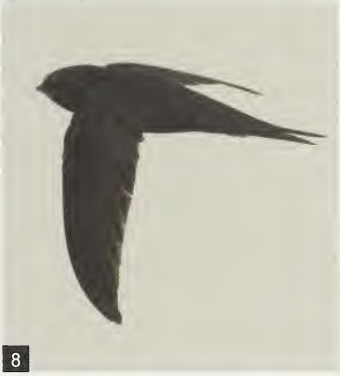
On Gran Canaria, an **African Crake** *Crex egregia* was photographed at Puerto Rico on 26 December 2014 (per *Dutch Birding* 37: 42). On Fuerteventura, an **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* was found in the garden of a hotel at Costa Calma on 4 March, whilst a **Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus* was photographed on 27 January (per *Dutch Birding* 37: 128–129). On La Palma, a **Purple Heron** was observed on 31 March–4 April and a **Dunlin** *Calidris alpina*, photographed in March, had been ringed in Estonia, *c.*4,600 km away, on 4 May 2011 (*PBu, lapalmabirds.blogspot.com.es*).

Cape Verde Islands

Records from November 2014–February 2015 include the following. The last two **Magnificent Frigatebirds** *Fregata magnificens* on the islands were still on Boavista in January (per *Dutch Birding* 37: 42). **Fea's Petrel** *Pterodroma feae* has been shown to breed on Santiago (per *Dutch Birding* 37: 191). Eleven **Eurasian Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia* were photographed at Rabil Lagoon, Boavista, on 11 November 2014 (*ARe*); there are now >35 records for the archipelago. A **Least Sandpiper** *Calidris minutilla* was photographed on Sal on 21 January, with another on Boavista on 11 February (per *Dutch Birding* 37: 126); there are six previous records, from Sal, Boavista and São Vicente (two on each island). A **Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* stayed on Sal in January; this is apparently the 16th record for the islands. A first-winter **Mediterranean Gull** *Ichthyaetus melanocephalus* photographed on Sal on 13 January appears to be the first for the archipelago. Two **Short-eared Owls** *Asio flammeus* were present on Sal in January; there are now 11 records for the Cape Verdes, of which four have been on Sal (per *Dutch Birding* 37: 42–53).

Chad

In February–June 2015, the following four species were recorded in Chad for the first time. A **Pel's Fishing Owl** *Scotopelia peli* was observed in Zakouma National Park (=NP) in February–March (*RT, LL & DP*). A **Desert Warbler** *Sylvia nana* / *S. deserti* was found at Ennedi, in the north-east, on 8 February (*LL*), with another north of Mao, near the Niger border, on the edge of the Sahara, on 17 February (*PB & TR*); it remains unresolved whether these were African or Asian Desert Warblers, or one of each. An **African Black Swift** *Apus barbatus* was photographed hawking at low level for 30 minutes on the south side of Ouadi Kharma, in the central grasslands, on 29 May (Fig. 8; *TW & JN*). Finally, a **Wattled Starling** *Creatophora cinerea*, showing undeveloped wattles, was calling from a treetop along the Chari River, south of N'Djamena, on 7 June (Fig. 9; *TW*).



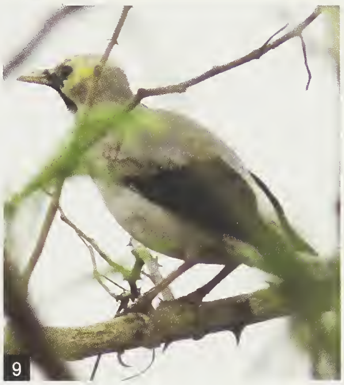


Figure 8. African Black Swift / Martinet du Cap *Apus barbatus*, Ouadi Kharma, central Chad, 29 May 2015 (Tim Wacher)

Figure 9. Wattled Starling / Étourneau caronculé *Creatophora cinerea*, near N'Djamena, Chad, 7 June 2015 (Tim Wacher)

Shrikes photographed at Zakouma NP in March–April showed features of **Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* rather than Red-tailed (*EW, TW*). **Black-headed Gonolek** *Laniarius erythrogaster*, found between Lac Fitri and Mongo in May, represents a northward range extension (*JN & TW*). A **Bruce's Green Pigeon** *Treron waalia* in a fig (*Ficus*) tree between Mangalme and Oum Hadjer in May

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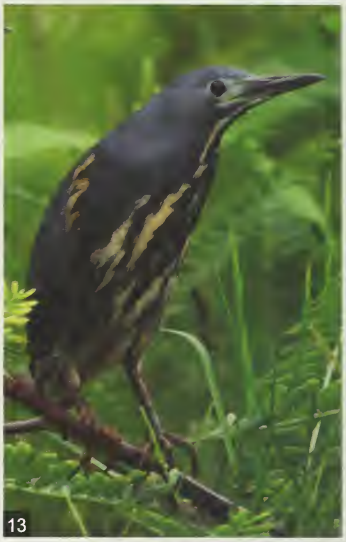
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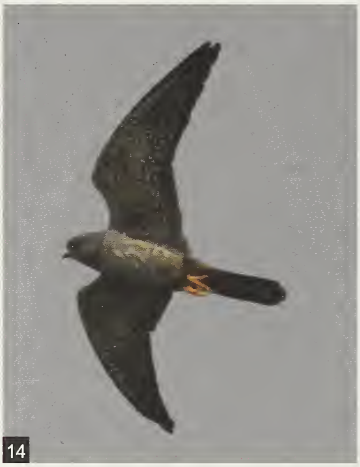
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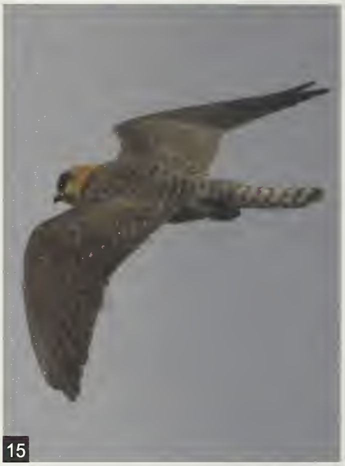
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Figure 10. Black-breasted Barbet / Barbican à poitrine noire *Pogonornis rolleti*, Zakouma National Park, Chad, 15 March 2015 (Tim Wacher)

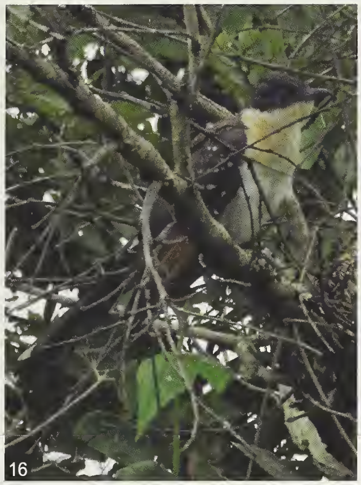
Figure 11. Buff-bellied Warbler / Phyllolaïs à ventre fauve *Phyllolais pulchella*, Zakouma National Park, Chad, 20 March 2015 (Tim Wacher)

was also relatively far north. The rhythmic, non-churring, nightjar song attributed to **Golden Nightjar** *Caprimulgus eximius* was heard near dusk and dawn around Mao in February and again, though more briefly, in southern Ouadi Rimé-Ouadi Achim at the end of the dry season in May (*TW*).

Additional sightings from Zakouma NP include the following. A **Bat Hawk** *Macheiramphus alcinus* was seen on 14 February (*CB*) and a **Greater Spotted Eagle** *Clanga clanga* on 19th (*CC*); there are just two previous reports from Chad of the latter, in January 1971 and winter 1996. The little-reported **Black-breasted Barbet** *Pogonornis rolleti* was frequently observed in February–May (Fig. 10; *PB, ZL, LL, DP*). Flocks of **Collared Pratincoles** *Glareola pratincola* were present in March and a pair at a nest containing two eggs suggests south-eastern Chad is part of their regular range (*RB, TW*). **Black Crowned Crane** *Balearica pavonina* and **Northern Carmine Bee-eater** *Merops nubicus* gathered in exceptionally large numbers, with 1000s of both species present in March (*LL, DP, TW*). Adult **Saddle-billed Storks** *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis* with immatures in March suggest breeding in the area. Also in March, a pair of **Buff-bellied Warblers** *Phyllolais pulchella*, photographed in *Acacia* at Tinga Camp (Fig. 11), may indicate that the species is resident in the south, whilst a **Singing Cisticola** *Cisticola cantans* was singing at the park headquarters (*TW*). Full details on the birds of Zakouma NP will be published in a forthcoming issue of this *Bulletin*.

Congo-Brazzaville

In January–May 2015, the following were reported. During the annual waterbird census at Lac Télé Community Reserve, a **Spur-winged Lapwing** *Vanellus spinosus* was observed between Epéna and Itanga on 21 February (Fig. 12; *JMI*); this is a first for the country (Dowsett, R. J., Atkinson, P. W. & Caddick, J. A. 2015. Checklist of the birds of Congo-Brazzaville). A



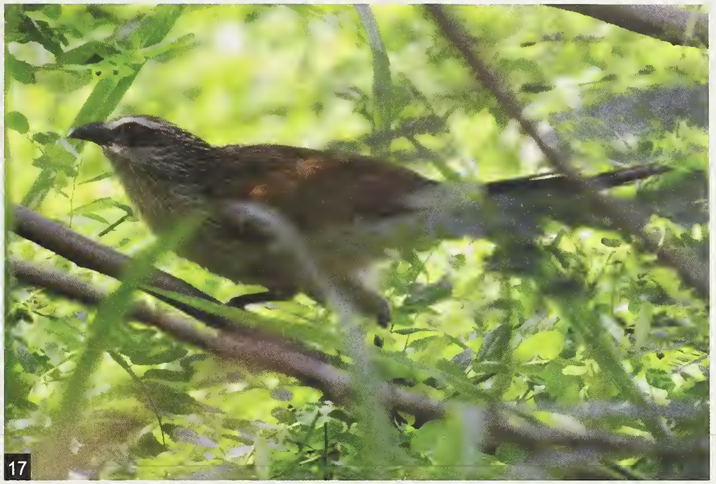


Figure 12. Spur-winged Lapwing / Vanneau éperonné *Vanellus spinosus*, Lac Télé Community Reserve, Congo-Brazzaville, 21 February 2015 (Roger Mobongo)

Figure 13. Dwarf Bittern / Blongios de Sturm *Ixobrychus sturmii*, Malonda Lodge, Congo-Brazzaville, 1 January 2015 (Vincent Delhaye-Prat)

Figure 14. Immature male Red-footed Falcon / Faucon kobez *Falco verspertinus*, Batéké Plateau, Congo-Brazzaville, 17 January 2015 (Bruno Portier)

Figure 15. Immature female Red-footed Falcon / Faucon kobez *Falco verspertinus*, Batéké Plateau, Congo-Brazzaville, 17 January 2015 (Bruno Portier)

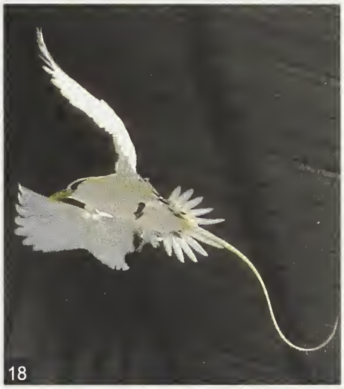
Figure 16. Juvenile Great Spotted Cuckoo / Coucou geai *Clamator glandarius*, Batéké Plateau, Congo-Brazzaville, 17 January 2015 (Bruno Portier)

Figure 17. White-browed Coucal / Coucal à sourcils blancs *Centropus superciliosus*, Malonda Lodge, Congo-Brazzaville, 26 April 2015 (Bruno Portier)

Dwarf Bittern *Ixobrychus sturmii* was near Malonda Lodge, *c.*15 km south of Pointe-Noire, on 1 January (Fig. 13; *VD-P*). On 17 January, >40 **Red-footed Falcons** *Falco verspertinus* were hunting low above tall grass on the Batéké Plateau, *c.*60 km north of Brazzaville (03°48'S 15°40'E; Figs. 14–15). The same day, a juvenile **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* was photographed a few km further north, along the main track to Ngabé (Fig. 16). Also on the Batéké Plateau, a **Jacobin Cuckoo** *C. jacobinus* was observed on 14 May (at 03°45'S 15°34'E); this species is considered a vagrant to the country. A **White-browed Coucal** *Centropus superciliosus* was photographed at Malonda Lodge, near Djéno, on 26 April (Fig. 17); there are just two previous records for the country, from the same site, in July 1991 and November 2014. The same day, a group of >150 migrating **Common Swifts** *Apus apus* paused briefly to forage over the lagoon before continuing north (*BPo*).

Côte d'Ivoire

The first **White-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon lepturus* for the country was at Abidjan airport, *c.*2 km from the ocean, on 24–26 January 2015 (Fig. 18; *BW & LS*). A **Lesser Jacana** *Microparra capensis* was found on the coast at Assouinde, near the Ghanaian border, on 25 January (Fig. 19) and was seen again on 7 February; this is a new locality for this patchily distributed species. Up to four **African Wattled Lapwings** *Vanellus senegallus* were seen on the Bandama River at Taboitien village, near Tiassale, from mid-December 2014 until at least May 2015; there are only a few records from the forest zone. On 7 February, one was photographed at Assouinde, representing the first coastal record (*LS*).



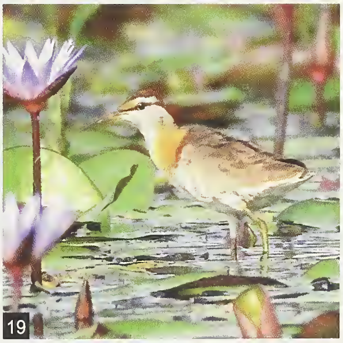
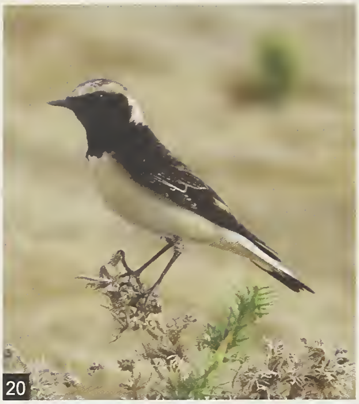
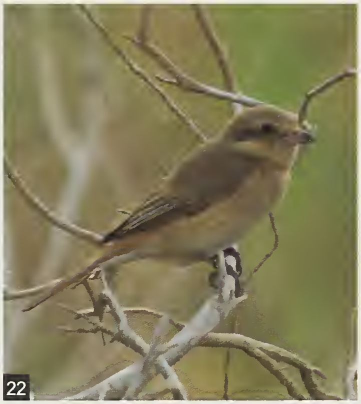


Figure 18. White-tailed Tropicbird / Phaéton à bec jaune *Phaethon lepturus*, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 26 January 2015 (Bob Wycherley)

Figure 19. Lesser Jacana / Jacana nain *Microparra capensis*, Assouinde, Côte d'Ivoire, 25 January 2015 (Lionel Sineux)





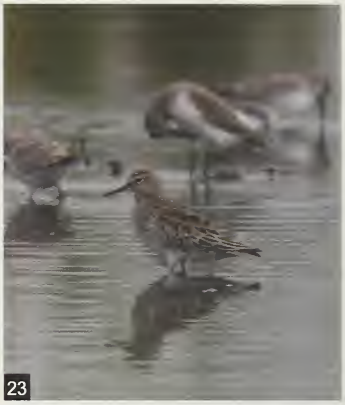


Figure 23. Pectoral Sandpiper / Bécasseau tacheté *Calidris melanotos*, Sakumono Lagoon, Ghana, 13 March 2015 (William Price)

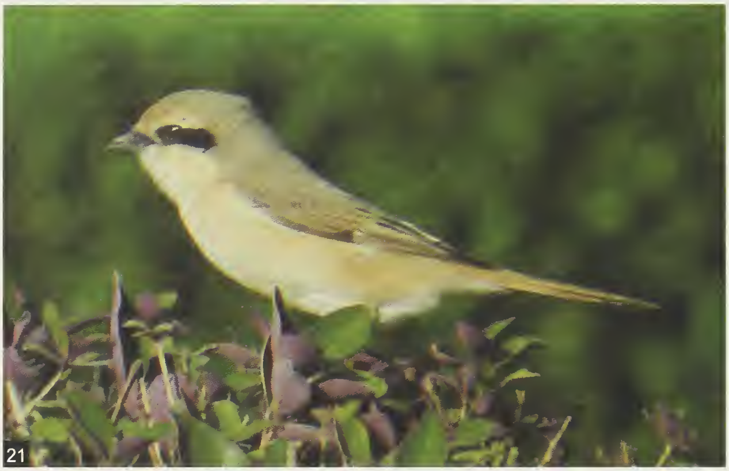


Figure 20. Male Pied Wheatear / Traquet pie *Oenanthe pleschanka*, Shams Alam area, Egypt, 13 March 2015 (Artur Bujanowicz)

Figure 21. Adult male Isabelline Shrike / Pie-grièche isabelle *Lanius isabellinus*, Shams Alam area, Egypt, 13 March 2015 (Artur Bujanowicz)

Figure 22. Second calendar-year Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*, Shams Alam area, Egypt, 12 March 2015 (Artur Bujanowicz)

Pie-grièche isabelle *Lanius isabellinus* de 2e année, zone de Shams Alam, Égypte, 12 mars 2015 (Artur Bujanowicz)

Egypt

A **Streaked Shearwater** *Calonectris leucomelas* was observed 20 km south of Safaga on 30 April 2015 (per *Dutch Birding* 37: 191). Records from the Shams Alam–Wadi Gemal National Park area on 10–13 March included a **Caspian Plover** *Charadrius asiaticus*, a male and a female **Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka* (Fig. 20), a **Ménétries's Warbler** *Sylvia mystacea* and four **Isabelline** (Daurian) **Shrikes** *Lanius isabellinus* (Figs. 21–22; *AB*).

Ethiopia

Approximately ten **African Black Swifts** *Apus barbatus* were positively identified by several observers between Goba and the Sanetti Plateau on 29 November—the birds were calling and their calls were compared with recordings while they were being watched (*RA*); Redman *et al.* (2009. *Birds of the Horn of Africa*) mention the species as hypothetical in Ethiopia, with just one unconfirmed record of three individuals near Goba in December 2006.

Ghana

A **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* was found at Sakumono Lagoon on 13 March 2015 (Fig. 23; *JP, WP, PS & RH*); there are eight previous records for Ghana, all of them from this site (*cf.* Dowsett-Lemaire, F. & Dowsett, R. J. 2014. *The Birds of Ghana*).

Kenya

Records from 2014 not mentioned in previous Recent Reports include the following. Four **Audubon's Shearwaters** *Puffinus lherminieri* were observed 25 km east of Watamu on 31 December. In October, *c.*8 **Greater Frigatebirds** *Fregata minor* were seen in Watamu Marine National Park (=NP), all of them heading south; this species is very rare along the Kenya coast. A **Red-footed Booby** *Sula sula* was found moribund on the beach at Watamu on 26 November and subsequently died; the species is a vagrant to Kenyan waters. Two **Barbary Falcons** *Falco* (*peregrinus*) *pelegrinoides*, rarely recorded in Kenya, were hunting around Ngulia Lodge on 25–27 November. A **Striped Flufftail** *Sarothrura affinis* was flushed and clearly seen on Mount Kenya on 5 January—a rarely recorded presumed resident of montane grassland and moorland, mainly above 3,000 m. A **Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus* was foraging at the Sabaki River mouth on 16 February; another, found on Watamu Beach on 24 March with a swelling on one of its legs, died the next day. A **Green-backed Twinspot** *Mandingoa nitidula*, a rare species around Nairobi, was mist-netted at Karen on 28 June.

The following reports are from the period January–May 2015. A **Palm-nut Vulture** *Gypohierax angolensis*, very rare in the Maasai Mara, was observed at Musiara March in January. A fifth-year **Greater Spotted Eagle** *Clanga clanga* was photographed in Nairobi NP on 25 January and again on 5 March. **African Skimmers** *Rynchops flavirostris* were noted on Lake Elmentaita and Lake Oloiden during the Naivasha Waterbird Counts in early February; this scarce species is rarely recorded at the Rift Valley lakes. A **European Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur*—a very rare migrant—was seen in Samburu National Reserve in mid May. A **Pallid Honeyguide** *Indicator meliphilus* identified in Nairobi NP on 28 March was the first record in >10 years. In the same park, a **Short-tailed Lark** *Pseudalaemon fremantlii*, not seen at this site for several years, was observed on 25 March. **Yellow White-eye** *Zosterops senegalensis* was 'discovered' in the Nairobi area in early 2015 and on the slopes of Mount Kenya in April; it could actually be a long-overlooked resident. A group of **Oriole Finches** *Linurgus olivaceus* was encountered in the Honi Valley on 9 May—a rare species in this part of Kenya (per *SH*).

Liberia

A colony of **Preuss's Cliff Swallows** *Pterochelidon preussi* was found at the St. Paul River bridge, in northern Monrovia, on 2 June, west of the previously reported colony at Harbel, near the airport (*BP*).

Madeira

Pelagic excursions on 26–28 May 2015 produced, among others, five **Fea's Petrels** *Pterodroma feae / deserta*, two **Zino's Petrels** *P. madeira*, 11 **European Strom-petrels** *Hydrobates pelagicus*, nine **Madeiran Storm-petrels** *H. castro*, two **Wilson's Storm-petrels** *Oceanites oceanicus*, one **White-faced Storm-petrel** *Pelagodroma marina* and a few dozen **Bulwer's Petrels** *Bulweria bulwerii*. Noteworthy landbirds included a **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* at Machico on 13 June and a female **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* at Ponta do Pargo on 15th (*www.madeirabirds.com*).

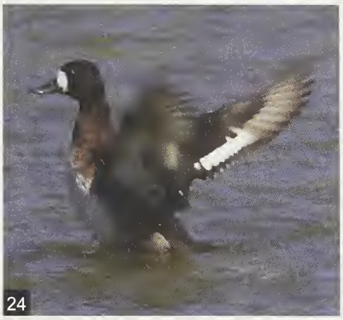
Mali

A **Freckled Nightjar** *Caprimulgus tristigma* was singing in Bamako's hippodrome neighbourhood, probably from a flat rooftop, before dawn on 14–21 February 2015; houses there are *c*.1.4 km from large rocky hills (*MC*). At least one pair of **Mali Firefinches** *Lagonosticta virata* was encountered in Bamako National Park, on 11 April, where there were also two **Mocking Cliff Chats** *Thamnolaea cinnamomeiventris* and many **Neumann's Starlings** *Onychognathus neumanni*; all three species are no doubt regular at this site, but the first two can be hard to find (*BP*).

Morocco

The following were reported for the period December 2014–May 2015. Approximately 2,200 **Scopoli's Shearwaters** *Calonectris diomedea* flew east into the Mediterranean past Tangier on 8 March and *c*.2,000 were seen around the Islas Chafarinas on 10 March. Ten **European Storm-petrels** *Hydrobates pelagicus* were noted on a pelagic out of Agadir on 23 March. A female **Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis* was observed at Oued Massa on 22 February (Fig. 24; *MB*) and a **Ring-necked Duck** *A. collaris* at Essaouira on 5 December. A **Great Northern Diver** *Gavia immer* at Oualidia on 30 December was the seventh for Morocco. A first-year **Allen's Gallinule** *Porphyrio alleni* was present at Oued Massa from 28 December (per *Dutch Birding* 37: 42).

In the north, single **Rüppell's Vultures** *Gyps rueppelli* were found at Djebel Moussa on 10 and 14 May (per *Dutch Birding* 37: 200). On 6 March *c*.1,000 **Black Kites** *Milvus migrans* were grounded by strong easterlies at Asilah with 700 south of Asilah the next day; 800 flew north in 30 minutes over Jebel Musa on 8 March. Notable northward migration over the sea of **Western Marsh Harriers** *Circus aeruginosus* was noted at Asilah, when *c*.70 passed in three hours on 6 March, with another 30 north over Asilah Plain earlier in the day. At least 105 **Short-toed Snake Eagles** *Circaetus gallicus* migrated north over Tangier / Jebel Musa on 8 March. An immature **Spanish Imperial Eagle** *Aquila adalberti* was photographed in the Zaer region on 4 March (Fig. 25; *MB*). In western



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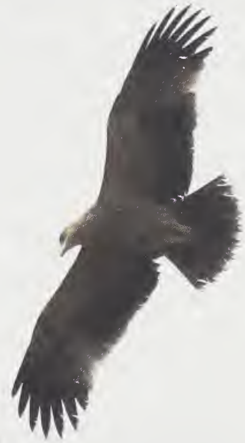

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Figure 24. Female Lesser Scaup / Fuligule à tête noire *Aythya affinis*, Oued Massa, Morocco, 22 February 2015 (Colin Valentine)

Figure 25. Immature Spanish Imperial Eagle / Aigle ibérique *Aquila adalberti*, Zaer region, Morocco, 4 March 2015 (Derrick Whilby)

Morocco (as well as in the Canary Islands), an unprecedented influx of **Red-footed Falcons** *Falco vespertinus* occurred in mid May (per *Dutch Birding* 37: 200).

Fourteen **Great Skuas** *Stercorarius skua* flew east past Tangier on 8 March (*MB*). An adult **Bonaparte's Gull** *Chroicocephalus philadelphia* photographed at Dakhla on 19 March was the first for Western Sahara (per *Dutch Birding* 37: 126). If accepted, a first-sumer **Franklin's Gull** *Leucophaeus pipixcan* at Nador on 15 April will be the eighth for Morocco (per *Dutch Birding* 37: 193). A male **Golden Nightjar** *Caprimulgus eximius* was observed and later found dead along the road between Dakhla and Aousserd on 3 May; this is the first for Western Sahara and the Western Palearctic (*http://moroccanbirds.blogspot.com/2015/05/golden-nightjar-new-species.html*). In south-eastern Western Sahara, up to 31 **Sudan Golden Sparrows** *Passer luteus* were photographed at Bir Anzarane between 30 January and 6 February; this is the species' northernmost record, as previous sightings were *c*.130 km to the south in the Aousserd area (per *Dutch Birding* 37: 129).

Mozambique

The following records are from January–May 2015. A pelagic trip off the Barra Peninsula on 21 April produced >30 **Greater Frigatebirds** *Fregata minor*, at least one adult male **Lesser Frigatebird** *F. ariel*, many **Sooty Terns** *Onychoprion fuscatus*, a **Brown** (=Southern) **Skua** *Stercorarius antarcticus* (possibly only the fourth record for Mozambique), and several **Black-bellied Storm-petrels** *Fregetta tropica* (*EM*). An immature **Greater Frigatebird** flew south along the beach at Inhassoro on 13 April (per *TH*). Another **Brown Skua** was seen from shore at Praia da Rocha, 10 km south of Tofo, on 5 May (Fig. 26). Observations made during a pelagic trip from Maputo on 10 May included a **European Storm-petrel** *Hydrobates pelagicus* (a very uncommon species in these waters and also a very late date), a **Brown Skua**, a **Sabine's Gull** *Xema sabini* (probably <10 records for the country; Fig. 27), and two **Sooty Terns** (*GA*).

Single **European Honey Buzzards** *Pernis apivorus* were reported from 'Coutada 12' on 8 February, Panda on 20 March, Mphingwe on 25 March, and Chemba on 26 March (per *AR & TH*). **Lesser Moorhens** *Gallinula angulata* were seen on the Limpopo floodplain at Lake Sacativa on 19 March (*MBo*) and 19 April (*EM*) and an **African Crake** *Crex egregia* was there on 20 March (*MBo*). A large flock of **Crab-plovers** *Dromas ardeola* was on the beach at Pomene in late January, whilst an immature was on Inhaca Island on 31 January (*GA*). A **Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* was at Inhambane estuary on 20 April (*EM*) and a **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* at Ponta da Barra on 20 March. The fourth **Great Knot** *Calidris tenuirostris* for Mozambique (and the sixth for southern Africa) remained at Ponta da Barra, near Inhambane, from 6 March until at least 21st; previous records, all from the same site, are from December 2004, September 2008 and May 2014, with two more from South Africa (one visiting West Coast National Park for several seasons from late 2000 to late 2003) and Namibia (Walvis Bay, November 2008). A second calendar-year **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus* was observed at Maputo on 2 February and possibly the same bird from 6 May to at least 17th. A **Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger*, possibly only the second for the country, was reported near Inhaca Island on 31 January (*GA*).

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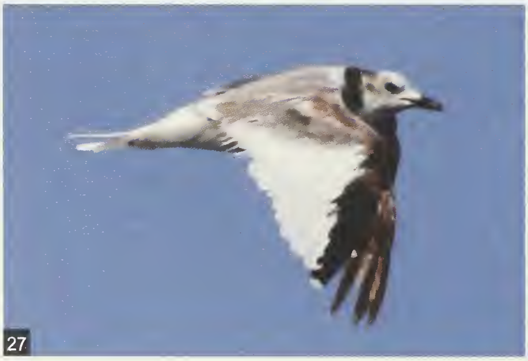

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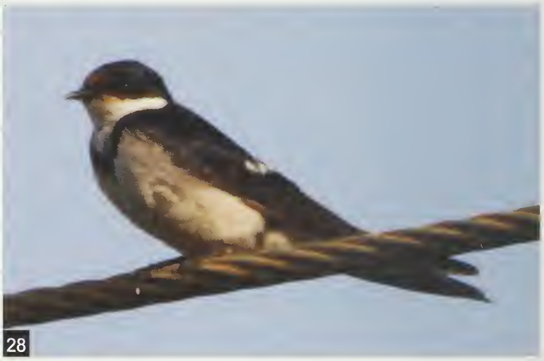

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Figure 26. Brown Skua / Labbe antarctique *Stercorarius antarcticus*, Praia da Rocha, Mozambique, 5 May 2015 (Gary Allport)

Figure 27. Sabine's Gull / Mouette de Sabine *Xema sabini*, off Maputo, Mozambique, 21 April 2015 (Gary Allport)

Figure 28. White-throated Swallow / Hirondelle à gorge blanche *Hirundo albigularis*, Maputo, Mozambique, 21 April 2015 (Gary Allport)

Exceptional floodwater near Maputo produced records of five **Cape Shovelers** *Anas smithii* (third record for the country and the first since 1973), two **Lesser Jacanas** *Microparra capensis*, **Greater Painted-snipe** *Rostratula benghalensis* and **White-throated Swallow** *Hirundo albigularis* (a very poorly known species in Mozambique; Fig. 28), all on 8 February, plus two **Black Herons** *Egretta ardesiaca* on 6 May (*GA*). Three **Northern Carmine Bee-eaters** *Merops nubicus* reported near the Ruvuma Delta, in the north, prompted additional recent reports of this species hitherto undocumented for Mozambique (*cf.* ABC Facebook page, 13 January).

A **Short-tailed Pipit** *Anthus brachyurus* was at the Chacane Wetlands, near Panda, on 24 April (*EM*). A **Basra Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus griseldis* was discovered along the Rio Maria road, just north of Beira, on 3 February, with another at the Grown Energy farm near Sena on 7 February and two more at the bridge over the Zangue River south of Catapu on 9 February; at the latter site one was still present in the first week of March (per *AR & TH*).

Namibia

Perhaps the most noteworthy find for the period January–June 2015 was that of southern Africa's sixth **Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus*, discovered at Avis Dam, near Windhoek, on 7 January, which remained until 16 February; previous records from the subregion were in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa (two), Zimbabwe (two) and Namibia (one), with the last record being in January 1999.

An **African Pygmy Goose** *Nettapus auritus* located near Okaukuejo, in Etosha National Park (=NP), on 8 June, is a rather westerly record. A **Great White Pelican** *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, ringed on 30 December 1972, was seen in Walvis Bay on 3 January, just over 42 years later. In Windhoek, a **Hadada Ibis** *Bostrychia hagedash*—a very unusual species for central Namibia—was in Pioneer Park on 24 January. A **Slaty Egret** *Egretta vinaceigula* was at Monte Christo farm, *c.*30 km north of Windhoek, on 25 January. Up to four **European Honey Buzzards** *Pernis apivorus* were reported from the Windhoek area in January–mid February. An **Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus* was observed in Namib Naukluft NP on 18 January, with a possible adult between Mariental and Keetmanshoop on 23 June; the latter would be a very southerly record for the country. Single **Amur Falcons** *Falco amurensis* were found amongst Red-footed Falcons *F. vespertinus* *c.*140 km north-east of Windhoek on 11 January and at Avis Dam, near Windhoek, on 24 January.

A **Wattled Crane** *Grus carunculatus* was reported from the Andoni Plains, in Etosha NP, on 10 March. An out-of-range **African Jacana** *Actophilornis africana* was seen in Ameib Rhino Sanctuary, near Usakos, in early June. Up to three **Eurasian Oystercatchers** *Haematopus ostralegus* stayed at Walvis Bay from late December until at least 8 February. A count of 1,300 **Caspian Plovers** *Charadrius asiaticus* at Omathiya Lakes, north of Etosha, on 18 January was one of the largest concentrations of this species recorded in the subregion. A **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva*, first seen at Walvis Bay in mid November, was still present on 21 April. Other waders at Walvis Bay included a **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* on 18 March–5 April, a **Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus* on 8 February, and many **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus* during the period, with >60 on 8 February, >30 on 11 March and a single on 2 June. Single **Red Phalaropes** *P. fulicarius* were reported on a dam *c.*50 km north of Maltahöhe on 5 March and *c.*20 km offshore from Walvis Bay on 7 March.

A **Woodland Kingfisher** *Halcyon senegalensis* was at Monte Christo farm, *c.*30 km north of Windhoek, on 25 January, returning to this site for its sixth consecutive season; another was at Omaruru on 29 January, yet another individual south of its normal distribution in the country. A **Broad-billed Roller** *Eurystomus glaucurus* west of Etosha NP, near Galton Gate, on 30 April, was unusually far west for this species. Also outside their normal range were an **African Pipit** *Anthus cinnamomeus* along the beach at Guano Bay, in Lüderitz, on 23 May, a female **African Paradise Flycatcher** *Terpsiphone viridis* at the edge of Walvis Bay on 5 April, and a **Eurasian Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus* in a garden in Lüderitz on 28–29 January. A pair of **Angolan Swees** *Coccopygia melanotis bocagei* was found *c.*13 km east of Kunene River Lodge on 29 April; this is probably the sixth record in the subregion, with at least five between Ruacana and Epupa Falls (per *TH*).

Niger

The **Barbary Falcon** *Falco (peregrinus) pelegrinoides* photographed at Galmi on 3 December 2014 (*cf. Bull. ABC* 22: 107) proved to be one of a pair that remained until at least 28 January 2015 (*TK & BK* per *UL & JB / West African Bird DataBase www.wabdab.org*).

Nigeria

The following species, found on the Okpara River, the boundary between Benin and Nigeria, at 08°16'N, on 12–13 April 2015, represent northerly extensions of their known ranges in south-west Nigeria west of the Niger River: **Green Turaco** *Tauraco persa*, **Red-chested Cuckoo** *Cuculus solitarius*, **Yellowbill** *Ceuthmochares aereus*, **Black-throated Coucal** *Centropus leucogaster*, **Wood Owl** *Strix woodfordii*, **Blue-breasted Kingfisher** *Halcyon malimbica*, **Baumann's Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus baumanni*, **Grey-headed Bristlebill** *Bleda canicapillus*, **Western Nicator** *Nicator chloris*, **Green Crombec** *Sylvietta virens*, **Yellow White-eye** *Zosterops senegalensis* and **Tropical Boubou** *Laniarius aethiopicus*. For most of these species there were previously no records north of Ile-Ife, at 07°29'N. **Little Weaver** *Ploceus luteolus* represents a significant extension south from the Niger River at Kainji (*FD-L & RJD*).

Rwanda

A **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* was roosting in a tree in Akagera National Park on 22 March 2015; according to Vande weghe & Vande weghe (2011. *Birds in Rwanda*) this is the first record of this species since 1969 (*JH*).

Senegal

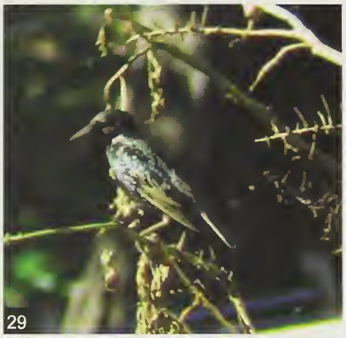
The following were reported from Dakar Technopôle in March–May 2015. Three **Egyptian Geese** *Alopochen aegyptiaca* first seen on 26 April were still present on 9 May, well outside their known range and apparently the first record for the peninsula (*cf.* Borrow, N. & Demey, R. 2011. *Birds of Senegal and The Gambia*). An **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* in non-breeding plumage was present on 26 April and (presumably the same individual) on 9 May, when breeding plumage was starting to appear; this is the sixth record for Senegal. An adult **Franklin's Gull** *Leucophaeus pipixcan* was observed on 15 March and (possibly the same individual) 3 May.

In Îles de la Madeleine National Park, Dakar, park rangers counted a record 96 nests of **Red-billed Tropicbirds** *Phaethon aethereus* in 2015; at least 50 contained young. On 27 June, at least six **Bridled Terns** *Onychoprion anaethetus* were seen; 3–4 pairs may breed on the islands this year. Also there was an adult **Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster* (*BP*).

Seychelles

Reports received by Seychelles Bird Records Committee (SBRC) from the period mid-December 2014–May 2105 include the following. Two species recorded in Seychelles for the first time were quite remarkable: a **Common Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris* on Denis Island on 5–10 March (Fig. 29) was possibly the first natural vagrant south of the equator and an adult male **Rufous Vanga** *Schetba rufa* on Aldabra on 19 January was the first vagrant record of this Madagascar endemic anywhere.

A **Seychelles Kestrel** *Falco araea* on La Digue on 10 April was the first report from the island in 40 years. A **Common Kestrel** *F. tinnunculus* on Alphonse on 17–18 February was the second record for Seychelles, a **Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus* on Aldabra on 5 April the third, two adult **Little Terns** *Sternula albifrons* on Mahé on 6 March (with one still present on 7 March) also the third record, and a **Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra* on Denis on 28 November the fifth.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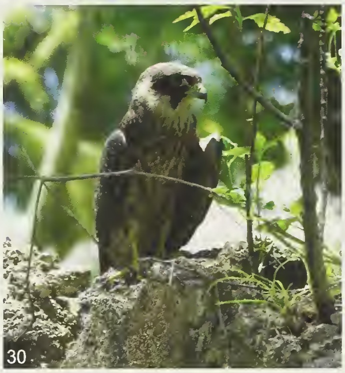
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Figure 29. Common Starling / Étourneau sansonnet *Sturnus vulgaris*, Denis Island, Seychelles, 5 March 2015 (Per-Arne Åhlen)

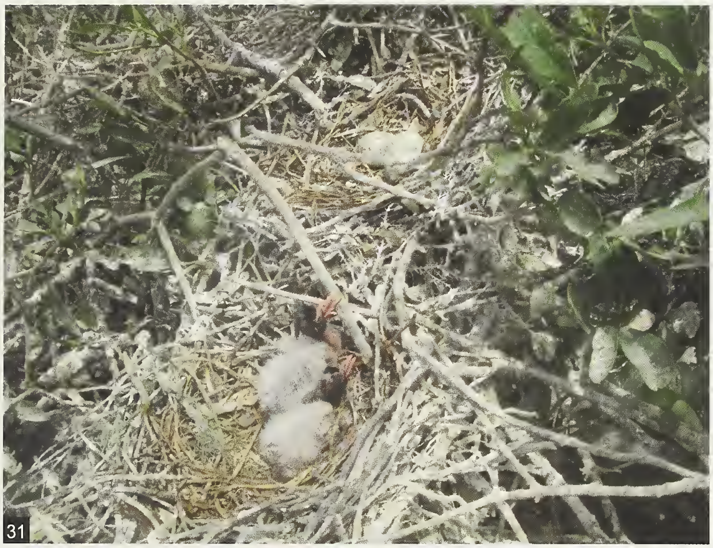
Figure 30. Juvenile Sooty Falcon / Faucon concolore *Falco concolor*, Farquhar, Seychelles, 12 December 2014 (Aurélie Duhec)

A new conservation centre opened on Farquhar in late 2014 resulting in the sighting of several species new to the atoll, including two immature **Madagascar Pond Herons** *Ardeola idae* on 2–6 February (six previous records east of Aldabra, where it breeds), a juvenile **Sooty Falcon** *Falco concolor* on 12 December (seven previous Seychelles records; Fig. 30), a **Pacific Swift** *Apus pacificus* on 17 March (14 records), three **Broad-billed Rollers** *Eurystomus glaucurus* on 7 December (22 previous records east of Aldabra, where it is an annual visitor) and a **Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata* on 6 March. A **Mascarene Martin** *Phedina borbonica* on 4 February (15 records) and a **White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba* on 3 December were second Farquhar records.

A **Broad-billed Roller** was observed on St. François on 18 February and a **White Wagtail** on Alphonse on 19 December. **Northern Wheatears** *Oenanthe oenanthe* were seen on Albabra on 6 January, Alphonse on 31 January–18 February and Desroches on 10–13 February. Also noteworthy were a **Long-tailed Cormorant** *Microcarbo africanus* on Assumption on 3 April (six records), a **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Calidris falcinellus* on Mahé on 10 May (six records), a **Lesser Kestrel** *Falco naumanni* on Alphonse on 15–16 March (eight records), a **Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius collurio* on Aldabra on 29 December (nine records) and a **Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius* on Alphonse on 1 February–17 March (ten records). Other records of interest included a **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* on St. François on 18 February, a **Eurasian Hobby** *Falco subbuteo* on Astove on 19 February, two **Eleonora's Falcons** *F. eleonorae* on Aldabra on 7 December and one (presumably one of the same birds) on 8–9 December, a **Common House Martin** *Delichon urbicum* on Alphonse on 15–17 April, and a **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* on Aldabra on 14 March (per *AS*).

Sierra Leone

Two nests of **Sacred Ibis** *Threskiornis aethiopicus* with two chicks and two eggs, respectively, were found at Tissana village, near the main peninsular road leading to Freetown, in mid-January 2015 (Fig. 31; *CS*); although the species is known to be resident in the country, breeding had not been documented previously. An **African Pitta** *Pitta angolensis* was photographed at a mining site



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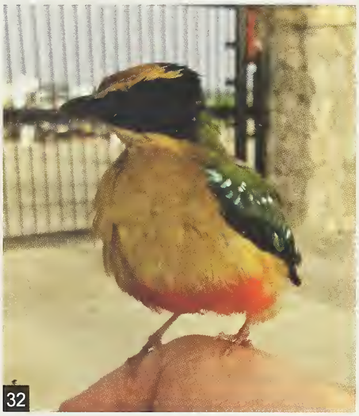

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Figure 31. Nests of Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus*, Sierra Leone, January 2015 (Charles Showers)

Nids de l'Ibis sacré *Threskiornis aethiopicus*, Sierra Leone, janvier 2015 (Charles Showers)

Figure 32. African Pitta / Brève de l'Angola *Pitta angolensis*, Kono, Sierra Leone, 27 April 2015 (Jaco Crous)

at Kono, in the east, on 27 April (Fig. 32; *JC*).

South Africa

The following records are from the period January–June 2015, with one from late December 2014. The first **Ortolan Bunting** *Emberiza hortulana* for South Africa was photographed in Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park on 29 December 2014; the only other record in the subregion was from 13 November 2013 in Namibia (*cf. Bull. ABC* 21: 228–230). Southern Africa's second **Snowy Egret** *Egretta thula* was discovered along the Black River, Western Cape, on 8 June and was still present at the end of the month.

Noteworthy species seen in the waters up to 150 nautical miles south and west of Cape Point include **Wandering Albatross** *Diomedea exulans* (a juvenile on 17 January; an adult and a juvenile on 19–20 April; a juvenile on 17 May), **Chatham Albatross** *Thallassarche* (*cauta*) *eremita* (singles on 21 April and in early May, the seventh and eighth for southern Africa), **Salvin's Albatross** *T.* (*c.*) *salvini* (one in early May), **Sooty Albatross** *Phoebetria fusca* (one on 13 May), **Light-mantled Albatross** *P. palpebrata* (one on 20 February), **Southern Giant Petrel** *Macronectes giganteus* (a white morph in early May), **Southern Fulmar** *Fulmarus glacialoides* (five in late May), **Slender-billed Prion** *Pachyptila belcheri* (one on 6 June), **White-headed Petrel** *Pterodroma lessoni* (one on 28 April; two on 13 May), **Spectacled Petrel** *Procellaria conspicillata* (several in January; three in March; two in April; two in May), **Flesh-footed Shearwater** *Ardenna* (=*Puffinus*) *carneipes* (singles on 17–18 and 24 January), **Franklin's Gull** *Leucophaeus pipixcan* (one in breeding plumage in early May), and **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* (two far offshore in early May).

Species observed in the waters south of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, include **Wandering Albatross** (one on 7 June), **Black-bellied Storm-petrel** *Fregeta tropica* (a few on 17 May), **European Storm-petrel** *Hydrobates pelagicus* (one on 10 January), **Barau's Petrel** *Pterodroma baraui* (at least one in mid April), **Antarctic Prion** *Pachyptila desolata* (30 on 7 June; at least six on 20 June), **Red-footed Booby** *Sula sula* (singles on 8 and 10 January), **Long-tailed Skua** *Stercorarius longicaudus* (one on 10 January), **Sabine's Gull** *Xema sabini* (one on 10 January), and **Sooty Tern** *Onychoprion fuscatus* (several flocks in mid April).

A moulting **Northern Rockhopper Penguin** *Eudyptes moseleyi* was found weakened between Brenton and Buffels Bay, Western Cape, in late January and taken into care. Also in Western Cape, a **Broad-billed Prion** *Pachyptila vittata* was briefly resting ashore at Scarborough on 30 May; this is a very rare species in the subregion with few recent records. Single **Red-tailed Tropicbirds** *Phaethon rubricauda* were noted near Cape Point on 18 February and at Port Edward, KwaZulu-Natal, on 1 April. At least one **Australasian Gannet** *Morus serrator* remained on Malgas Island in Saldahna Bay, Western Cape, on 11 March, with another on Bird Island in Algoa Bay, Eastern Cape, in late March. An immature **Red-footed Booby** was at Cape Recife, near Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, on 6 April.

Fulvous Whistling Ducks *Dendrocygna bicolor* were found at Grahamstown, Eastern Cape, on 25 January (one) and 4–11 February (a pair), and at Paarl Bird Sanctuary, Western Cape, in April (three)—far west of the species' normal range. A **Green-backed Heron** *Butorides striata* at Port Alfred, Eastern Cape, on 26 May, was a remarkable provincial find; it was seen again on 24 June. In KwaZulu-Natal, a **Rufous-bellied Heron** *Ardeola rufiventris* was at Cape Vidal on 15 January, with another at Stanger on 1 April—rather southerly records.

A **Slaty Egret** *Egretta vinaceigula* remained at Gnu Valley, Gauteng, in January–February, with another in southern Kruger National Park (=NP), Mpumulanga, in March. Several **Goliath Herons** *Ardea goliath* were reported from Western Cape, with an adult east of Velddrif on 7 February and 7–15 March, and an immature also there on 15 March; up to five at Verlorensvlei, near Elands Bay, on 23 March–22 April; one in the Overberg on 25 April, with another along the Breede River at the base of Bainskloof Pass. Also in Western Cape, a **Marabou Stork** *Leptoptilos crumenifer* was seen near Gansbaai on 25 January and six **Abdim's Storks** *Ciconia abdimii* between Worcester and Wolseley on 23 February, with one near Table View on 2–4 May.

Similar to 2014, an influx of **European Honey Buzzards** *Pernis apivorus* occurred throughout South Africa, with >120 records in January–April, from Limpopo (at least 11), Mpumalanga (*c.*10), KwaZulu-Natal (22), Gauteng (35), North West Province (five), Free State (ten), Northern Cape (one), Eastern Cape (eight) and Western Cape (15); there was also one from 24 May, east of Winburg, Free State. A **Bateleur** *Terathopius ecaudatus* was seen between Piketberg and Koringberg, Western Cape, on 6 January. Notable vulture sightings included a juvenile **Bearded Vulture** *Gypaetus barbatus* at Springs, Gauteng, on 11 January; a **White-backed Vulture** *Gyps africanus* along Zaagkuilsdrift Road, Limpopo Province, on 7 February; four **Cape Vultures** *G. coprotheres* west of Middelburg, Eastern Cape, on 7 February, with one in the Murraysburg district, Western Cape, on 11 April, and two between Mossel Bay and George, Western Cape, on 12 May; and a **Lappet-faced Vulture** *Torgos tracheliotos* at Hekpoort, Gauteng, on 10 February. In Western Cape, **Brown Snake Eagles** *Circaetus cinereus* were reported from Robertson on 18 January, Caledon on 8 February, Paarl Mountain on 28 February, Darling on 1 March (two), north of Silverstroomstrand on 3 March, and between Darling and the R27 on 5 March, whilst in Eastern Cape, singles were at Kariega Game Reserve on 8 January and near Port Alfred on 19 March. **Montagu's Harriers** *Circus pygargus* were seen near Plettenberg Bay, Western Cape, on 12 January, at Pongola Nature Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal, on 26 January (at least two), east of Tweeling, Free State, in late January, and west of Bredasdorp, Western Cape, on 11 March. A **Western Marsh Harrier** *C. aeruginosus* was noted near Vogelfontein, Limpopo Province, on 27 January and another at Marievale Bird Sanctuary, Gauteng, on 3 March. In Northern Cape, a well out-of-range **Little Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter minullus* was located *c.*10 km east of Noupoort on 20 June. A **Lesser Spotted Eagle** *Clanga pomarina* was observed at Darvill Bird Sanctuary, Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, on 7 February, with another at Hilton College Nature Reserve on 14 March. A **Tawny Eagle** *Aquila rapax* was west of Middelburg, Eastern Cape, on 9 February, a pale-morph **Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus* at Zululand Rhino Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal, on 1 January, and an **Ayres's Hawk Eagle** *H. ayresii* in a Cowie's Hill garden, KwaZulu-Natal, on 15 February. In North West Province, **Long-crested Eagle** *Lophaetus occipitalis* appears to be expanding its range west, with birds reported at Kgaswane Mountain Reserve near Rustenburg and near The Cradle of Humankind in January, and near Potchefstroom on 29 March. Records in Western Cape included one between Hopefield and Malmesbury on 3 January, a pair flying over Hoekwil on 3 March, singles in the George area on 22 March, 9 April and 27 May, one near Harkerville on 23 March, and singles at Witfontein Nature Reserve and near Voorbrug on 11 April.

In January–March, several **Amur Falcons** *Falco amurensis* were reported from various localities in Western Cape, the largest flock being one of 25 north of Mossel Bay on 24 March. In the same period, an influx of **Red-footed Falcons** *F. vespertinus* occurred, with at least 100 individuals being recorded in almost all provinces, the majority in February in Gauteng (at least 19), Mpumalanga (26) and Eastern Cape (26); the last were reported from Western Cape in mid March (two) and Limpopo Province on 29 March (one). **Sooty Falcons** *F. concolor* were located near Paul Kruger gate, Kruger NP, Mpumalanga, on 5 February (one) and in Mbazwana, KwaZulu-Natal, on 28 February (two), whilst one arrived at Emily Moon Resort in Plettenberg Bay, Western Cape, on 4 March and remained until at least 11 April, visiting this site for its fourth consecutive season. In Northern Cape, a **Eurasian Hobby** *F. subbuteo* was observed near Mokala NP on 16 January—an unusual record for this part of the country.

A dead male **Harlequin Quail** *Coturnix delegorguei* was found outside of the species' normal range in Kingsmead, KwaZulu-Natal, in February. A **Common Buttonquail** *Turnix sylvaticus* was picked up after it had flown into a roof in Westcliff, Johannesburg, Gauteng, on 2 February, but subsequently died. In Memel, Free State, a **White-winged Flufftail** *Sarothrura ayresi* was put up during a 'flufftail flush' on 25 February—an unusual record for the area. A **Baillon's Crake** *Zapornia* (=*Porzana*) *pusilla* was at Rondevlei Nature Reserve, Western Cape, on 24–27 January, and an **African Crake** *Crex egregia* east of Tweeling, Free State, also in late January. An adult and an immature **Allen's Gallinule** *Porphyrio alleni* stayed at Zwelitsha Pans, near King Williamstown, Eastern Cape, on 22 February–9 March. In Free State, a pair of **Lesser Moorhens** *Gallinula angulata* was located at a wetland near Sasolburg on 7 January, with one also present there on 25 January–26 February.

Single **Lesser Jacanas** *Microparra capensis* were observed at Mkhombo Dam, Mpumalanga, on 22 March–9 April and Darvill Bird Sanctuary in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, on 18–27 April. A **Bronze-winged Courser** *Rhinoptilus chalcopterus* was seen west of Sasolburg, Free State, on 2 February. In Western Cape, a

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* remained at a dam between Malmesbury and Hopefield on 21 February–27 March; this is a very rare species in the province, with the last record from December 2006 at Rocherpan. Another was found near Kenton, Eastern Cape, on 23–28 May; this is apparently the first for the province. Up to 21 **Caspian Plovers** *Charadrius asiaticus* were at the Kliphoek Salt Pans in Velddrif, Western Cape, on 14 January–10 February. A **Lesser Sand Plover** *C. mongolus* was seen intermittently in West Coast National Park, Western Cape, from 5 April until at least 24 June. Also in Western Cape, a **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* was discovered at De Mond Nature Reserve, near Arniston, on 6 January, whilst another remained at Olifantsbos in Table Mountain NP on 26 February–26 April; one was at Mpempe Pan, KwaZulu-Natal, on 9–12 April. Single **American Golden Plovers** *P. dominica* were reported at De Mond Nature Reserve on 14 February and 6 April.

Single **Pectoral Sandpipers** *Calidris melanotos* were at the Gamtoos River, Eastern Cape, on 6 January, at Krugersdrift Dam near Bloemfontein, Free State, on 6–24 January, and at Mkhombo Dam, Mpumalanga, on 24 February and 29 March–5 April. The first **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *C. falcinellus* for 2015 was in West Coast NP, Western Cape, on 5 April. A **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* was found at the Sappi wetlands in Stanger, KwaZulu-Natal, on 12 January. A **Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* stayed at Mkhombo Dam, Mpumalanga, on 29 March–1 May. A **Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus* was still present in West Coast NP, Western Cape, throughout January and (the same individual?) on 25 March–23 May. A few **Green Sandpipers** *T. ochropus* were reported in January–March from Kruger NP, Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal. **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus* frequented saltpans in Western Cape near Velddrif throughout January until at least 10 February (one) and on 8 March (one), and south of Dwarskersbos on 13 February–5 March (at least three). A **Red Phalarope** *P. fulicarius* was at Marakele NP near Thabazimbi, North West Province, on 18 February.

Single **Franklin's Gulls** were found in Western Cape, between Gansbaai and Dyer Island on 22 April (one in breeding plumage) and at Great Brak River on 1 May, and in KwaZulu-Natal, at St. Lucia estuary until at least 30 April, at Bayhead in Durban on 1 May, and in Umtentweni, Port Shepstone on 22 June (one in breeding plumage). A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus* was at Spitskop Dam near Kimberley, Northern Cape, on 20 January, and another was in Durban Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, on 6 March–7 April. A **Lesser Crested Tern** *Thalasseus bengalensis* was discovered at Nahoon Point in East London, Eastern Cape, on 11 May; this is a rare species in the province, with the last confirmed record from March 2009. At least two **Sooty Terns** were present at St. Lucia estuary, KwaZulu-Natal, on 2–10 April. In North West Province, an **African Skimmer** *Rynchops flavirostris* was located at Vaalkop Dam on 30 April. An **African Green Pigeon** *Treron calvus* in the Sasolburg region, Free State, on 1 February, is perhaps the first record for the province. A **Grey Go-away-bird** *Corythaixoides concolor* visited a garden in Kimberley, Northern Cape, on 5 February. A **Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus* stayed near St. Francis Bay, Eastern Cape, for a few days in January, whilst another remained near Riebeek West, Western Cape, on 7–22 March. In Northern Cape, a **Pearl-spotted Owlet** *Glaucidium perlatum* in a garden between Hanover and Colesburg on 21–22 February was a rather surprising find. Also unusual were a female **Pennant-winged Nightjar** *Caprimulgus vexillarius* between Melkrivier and Marken, in the Waterberg, Limpopo Province, on 5 January, and an **African Palm Swift** *Cypsiurus parvus* at Kommetjie, Western Cape, on 8 February. Southern Africa's 16th **White-throated Bee-eater** *Merops albicollis* was seen in Kruger NP on 27 January, whilst the 17th record involved three at Thornybush Game Reserve, Limpopo Province, on 22 April. Two **Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters** *M. persicus* were observed in Agulhas NP, Western Cape, on 11 March. In Eastern Cape, two **Southern Yellow-billed Hornbills** *Tockus leucomelas* in Addo NP on 10 May were several hundred km south of the species' normal distribution.

Up to three **Dusky Larks** *Pinarocorys nigricans* were at Mavela Game Lodge, KwaZulu-Natal, in late January–April, with two in Ndumo Game Reserve on 4 May; one was still present at Kgomo Kgomo, North West Province, on 2 March. **Tree Pipits** *Anthus trivialis*, not frequently encountered in South Africa, were located at Kgaswane Nature Reserve, North West Province, on 8–22 February (up to three) and at Afguns, Limpopo Province, on 11 April. Southern Africa's fourth **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* was at Strandfontein Sewage Works, Western Cape, on 25–28 April. The long-staying **Mountain Wagtail** *M. clara* at Groenkloof Nature Reserve, Gauteng, was still present on 19 January, whilst the **African Pied Wagtail** *M. aguimp* at Jonkershoek, Western Cape, was also still there on 6 April–24 May.

A **Collared Palm Thrush** *Cichladusa arquata* seen south of Lower Sabie in Kruger NP, Mpumalanga, on 20 May was unusually far south. A **River Warbler** *Locustella fluviatilis* was ringed in a garden in Morningside, Sandton, Gauteng, on 5 January, and at least two were observed in the Kgomo Kgomo area, North West Province, on 24 January. A **Eurasian Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* was mist-netted in Moreletakloof Nature Reserve near Pretoria, Gauteng, on 7 February, and a **Marsh Warbler** *A. palustris* was frequently heard singing near Scarborough on the Cape Peninsula on 22 March–6 April. A **Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla* was reported from Zaagkuildrift Road, Limpopo Province, on 20 March, a **Garden Warbler** *S. borin* from Nyaru Game Lodge, near Mossel Bay, Western Cape, on 10–15 March, and an **Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina* in Karoo NP, near Beaufort West, Western Cape, on 16 May. A **Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis*—a very rare species in South Africa—was recorded in Waterberg Game Park, Melkrivier, Limpopo Province, on 4 March. A **Eurasian Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus* was found dead in a garden in Oudtshoorn, Western Cape, on 6 February, whilst two were observed in East London, Eastern Cape, on 20 February. In Western Cape, up to two **Red-backed Shrikes** *Lanius collurio* remained east of Velddrif on 2–19 March; another was located near Rondevlei on 7 March (per *TH & AR*).

Sudan

Records from the Khartoum area in February–May 2015 include the following. At a small sewage site at Omdurman Islamic University, four pairs of **Hottentot Teals** *Anas hottentota* with *c*.15 young were observed on 1 February. Also there were a **Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus* and at least one **Purple Swamphen** *Porphyrio porphyrio*; the latter species has now been recorded at all four sewage sites visited in the Khartoum area and >125, an unexpected large number, was subsequently counted at Sunt Forest on 22 May. At Jebel Aulia, south of Khartoum, *c*.40 **Slender-billed Gulls** *Chroicocephalus genei*, *c*.10 **Caspian Gulls** *Larus cachinnans*, *c*.10 **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** *L. fuscus* and **Caspian Terns** *Hydroprogne caspia* were seen on 21 February (*TJ*).

Tunisia

The following were reported in January–February 2015. A **Great Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* was seen at Lake Ichkeul on 19 February. In J'bil National Park, a flock of 24 **Eurasian Dotterels** *Charadrius morinellus* was found on 16 February (*MB*). The fourth **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* for the country was seen at Djerba, on 5 January. Also there were four **Great Skuas** *Stercorarius skua*. In early January, 50–100 **African Reed Warblers** *Acrocephalus baeticatus* were counted at the wetlands of Douz, Zaafrane and Ghidma (per *Dutch Birding* 37: 42–53). On 13 February, 6–8 **Alpine Accentors** *Prunella collaris* were observed at Zaghouan (*MB*).

Uganda

Records for the period late December 2014–April 2015 include the following. At least 16 **Great-crested Grebes** *Podiceps cristatus*, including dependent juveniles, were on Saka Lakes, Fort Portal, on 1 February; there are few breeding records for the country. Two pairs of **White-backed Ducks** *Thalassornis leuconotus* with young were noted at Airstrip Ponds, in Rakai District, on 19 March. Two **Bat Hawks** *Machieramphus alcinus* were observed in Mpanga Forest on 11 March. More than 200 **Steppe Buzzards** *Buteo buteo vulpinus* spiralling over Saka Hill on 1 April was an impressive total, with 30 **Black Kites** *Milvus migrans*, four **Steppe Eagles** *Aquila rapax* and four **Lesser Spotted Eagles** *Clanga pomarina* also there. A **Congo Serpent Eagle** *Dryotriorchis spectabilis* showed well at Semliki on 26 April.

An **African Finfoot** *Podica senegalensis* was seen on the Ishasha River, in Queen Elizabeth National Park (=NP), on 6 March. On Lake Opeta, >55 **Lesser Jacanas** *Microparra capensis* were counted on 17 April. A **White-crowned Lapwing** *Vanellus albiceps* was recorded in Murchison Falls NP on 14 January (*RS*). A **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* was observed in Queen Elizabeth NP on 30 December (Fig. 33); this is a rare vagrant so far inland (*FS*). At least 50 **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** *Larus fuscus* migrated over Fort Portal on 30 March. A **Fraser's Eagle Owl** *Bubo poensis* in Semliki NP on 3 January was the first record for this site; only four records are mentioned for Uganda in Carswell *et al.* (2005. *The Bird Atlas of Uganda*). Two **Verreaux's Eagle Owls** *B. lacteus* were at Tooro Botanical Gardens on 9 February. In Semliki NP, two **Black Dwarf Hornbills** *Horizocerus hartlaubi* were observed on 8 March, an **African Piculet** *Verreauxia africana* on 27 April and six **Swamp Palm Bulbuls** *Thescelocichla leucopleura* on 3 January; there are few recent records of any of these species.

A **Basra Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus griseldis* with two Great Reed Warblers *A. arundinaceus* and 20 Eurasian Reed Warblers *A. scirpaceus*, was seen well at Semliki

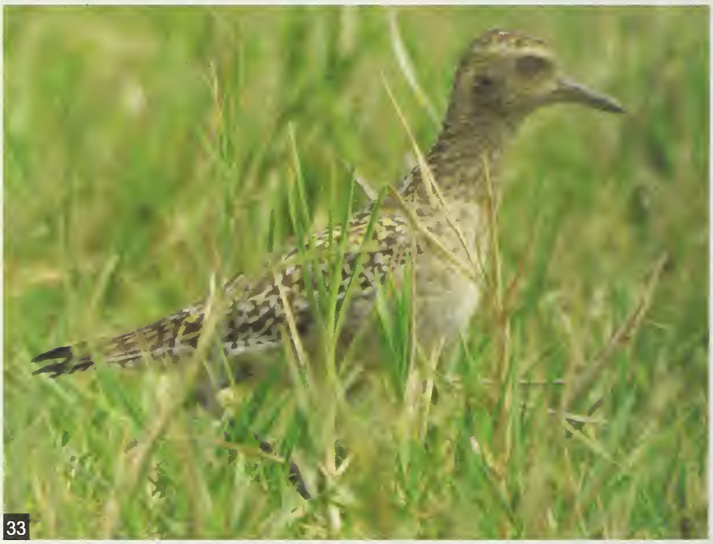


Figure 33. Pacific Golden Plover / Pluvier fauve *Pluvialis fulva*, Queen Elizabeth National Park, Uganda, 30 December 2014 (Frazer Small)

Toro Reserve on 1 March; there are fewer than five Ugandan records. A **Boran Cisticola** *Cisticola bodessa* was identified at Irriri, Karamoja region, on 18 January. Also there were six **Cut-throat Finches** *Amadina fasciata*. A pair of **White-collared Olivebacks** *Nesocharis ansorgei* was regularly seen entering an old weaver nest at Fort Portal on 12 February–3 April. Fifteen **Magpie Mannikins** *Spermestes fringilloides* were at the visitor's centre at Mpanga Forest on 12 March; this is a very local and scarce species in Uganda. A **Cuckoo-finch** (Parasitic Weaver) *Anomalospiza imberbis* at Ngariam, near Katakwi, on 16 April is an uncommon visitor. Two pairs of **Papyrus Canaries** *Crithagra koliensis* were recorded at Lake Opeta on 17 April. A male **Brown-rumped Bunting** *Emberiza affinis* was singing at Awalukok, north of Lira, on 18 February; there are <10 Ugandan records (*RS*).

Zambia

The first **Hartlaub's Duck** *Pteronetta hartlaubii* for the country was reported at a dam on a new mine development in the north-west on 10 January 2015; this record is well south of its known range (per *TH*).

Zimbabwe

The following records are from the period December 2014–June 2015. A **Great Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* and a **Black-rumped Buttonquail** *Turnix hottentottus* were observed at Wamba Dam, Mutasa, on 5 January (*MS*). Twelve **Black Storks** *Ciconia nigra* at Chinga Pan, Save Valley Conservancy, on 13 January (*SL*) was an unusually large group. At Victoria Falls Sewage Ponds a large concentration of 260 **Marabou Storks** *Leptoptilus crumenifer* was seen on 19 February (*DT*). Three **African Pygmy Geese** *Nettapus auritus* were noted at Claw Dam, Kadoma (*AF*), with one at Rainham Dam, Harare (*JB*); the species is declining drastically around Harare. **Cape Teal** *Anas capensis* also appears to be declining: none was reported during the African Waterbird Census in January (*DR-G*).

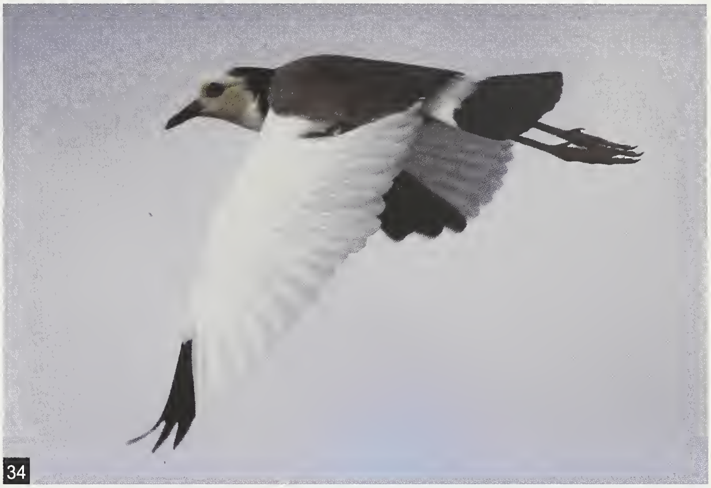


Figure 34. Long-toed Lapwing / Vanneau à ailes blanches *Vanellus crassirostris*, Mongwe River mouth, Zimbabwe, May 2015 (Chris Bishop)

A good number of **European Honey Buzzards** *Pernis apivorus* were sighted, including one at Victoria Falls Hotel on 30 December, one at Gosho Park near Marondera on 31 January, one Harare on 29 March, several at Trichelia Camp, Mana Pools, with at least two still present at Nduna Camp, in Malilangwe Nature Reserve, on 18 June (per *TH & D-RG*). Forty **Yellow-billed Kites** *Milvus migrans parasitus* at Inyankuni Dam, near Bulawayo, on 13 December was a very large group (*GL*). A male **Montagu's Harrier** *Circus pygargus* was seen at Komani Estates on 25 January (*KD*). A **Grasshopper Buzzard** *Butastur rufipennis* reported from Ngamo Pans, Hwange National Park, on 7 December has been accepted by BirdLife Zimbabwe's Rarities Committee as the first for Zimbabwe; also there were >100 **Lesser Spotted Eagles** *Clanga pomarina* (*BR*). A **Red-necked Buzzard** *Buteo auguralis* was claimed on 27 December (*JF & FC*); this would also be a first for the country if accepted, but confusion with other buzzards cannot be ruled out. A **Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus* was seen at Monavale Vlei on 12 February (*JM*). The 50-year old **Verreaux's Eagle** *Aquila verreauxii* survey in Matobo National Park, censused 26 pairs in 2014; peak numbers were 55 pairs in 1976 (*JBr*).

At Komani Estate, near Harare, a **Corn Crake** *Crex crex* was seen on 17 January (*CSt*) with another there on 25 January (*KD*). At Monovale Vlei, a **Buff-spotted Flufftail** *Sarothrura elegans* was reported on 21 December (*JM*) and no fewer than 15 **Streaky-breasted Flufftails** *S. boehmii* on 2 January; a clutch of three eggs of the latter was found on 12 February (*AM*). On 17 January, 43 **Rock Pratincoles** *Glareola nuchalis* were counted near Chundu Island, above Victoria Falls (*CBa*). Eight **Long-toed Lapwings** *Vanellus crassirostris* were at Victoria Fall Sewage ponds (*DT*), two at Chikwenya on 18–21 April (*TWi*), and two at Mongwe River mouth on 9 May (Fig. 34; *DR-G, BF & CBi*). A **Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* was found at Nyanyana, Kariba, on 18 January (*CM & BC*). A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus*, a rarely recorded species in Zimbabwe, was at Trichelia Camp, Mana Pools, on 28 December (*JF & FC*). A **Thrush Nightingale** *Luscinia luscinia* was ringed at Glen Lorne, Harare, on 7 December (*NH*). A **Basra Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus griseldis* was claimed on call at Komani Estate, near Harare, on 25 January (*AM*); no acceptable records have yet been submitted. A male **Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla* was at Seldom Seen, in the Bvumba, on 8

December (*MA & FP*). **Thick-billed Weaver** *Amblyospiza albifrons*, a new bird for Kadoma, was seen at the Golf Club (*MP*); the species started breeding at the Mashumavale River, but all the nests were washed away (*all* per *DR-G*).

Records were collated by Ron Demey from contributions supplied by Antonio Acedo (AA), Gary Allport (GA), Rich Andrews (RA), Mathew Axelrod (MA), Colin Baker (CBa), James Ball (JBa), Rubén Barone (RBa), Mark Beevers / Rockjumper Birding Tours (MB), Colin Bell (CB), Paul Benecke (PB), Roseline Beudels (RB), Chris Bishop (CBi), Maans Booysen (MBo), John Brebner (JBr), Joost Brouwer (JB), Artur Bujanowicz (AB), Robert Burton (RBu), V. Rubén Cerdeña (VC), Callan Cohen (CC), Bob Collett (BC), Ferdi Couto (FC), Mary Crickmore (MC), Jaco Crous (JC), Francisco Cruz (FCr), Vincent Delhaye-Prat (VD-P), Ken Dixon (KD), Robert J. Dowsett (RJD), Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire (FD-L), Miguel Fernández del Castillo (MF), Bob Fisher (BF), Roger Fotso (RF), Jono Francis (JF), Andy Fussell (AF), Trevor Hardaker (TH), Nick Hart (NH), Stratton Hatfield (SH), James Hogg (JH), Rob Holmes (RH), Tom Jenner (TJ), Barbie Kusserow (BK), Tim Kusserow (TK), Lorna Labuschagne (LL), Zanne Labuschagne (ZL), Marc Languy (ML), Rolf Larsson (RL), Sean Lenton (SL), Ulf Liedén (UL), Gaynor Lightfoot (GL), Etienne Marais (EM), Alex Masterson (AM), Cherrith McAdam (CM), Jérôme Mokoko Ikonga (JMI), Jimmy Muropa (JM), John Newby (JN), Margaret Parrock (MP), Faansie Peacock (FP), Bram Piot (BP), Bruno Portier (BPo), Darren Potgieter (DP), Jonathan Price (JP), William Price (WP), Thomas Rabeil (TR), Alain Reygel (ARe), Allan Ridley (AR), Beneharo Rodríguez (BRo), Brendan Ryan (BR), Enrique Sacramento (ES), Morgan Saineti (MS), Pete Saunders (PS), Paul Scholte (PSc), Charles Showers (CS), Lionel Sineux (LS), Roger Skeen (RS), Adrian Skerrett (AS), Frazer Small (FS), Clive Stokil (CSt), Rod Tether (RT), Daryl Tiran (DT), Joaquín Vizcaíno (JV), Tim Wacher (TW), E. van de Westhuizen (EW), Tom Wilson (TWi), Bob Wycherley (BW),and from Dutch Birding, sa-rarebirdnews@googlegroups.com, avescanarias.blogspot.com, lapalmabirds.blogspot.com and www.madeirabirds.com.

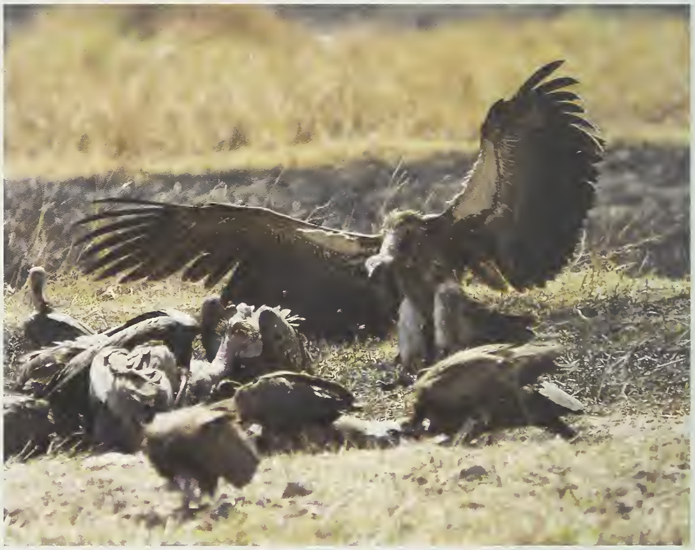
Contributions for Recent Reports can be sent to Ron Demey, Walter Thijsstraat 9, B-3500 Hasselt, Belgium and (preferably) by e-mail: rondemey1@gmail.com or recent_reports@africanbirdclub.org

Corrigenda Recent Reports *Bull. ABC* 22(1)

Dick Forsman commented as follows on two photographs of raptors published in the last issue of Recent Reports as Figs. 20 & 21: 'Fig. 20 is a juvenile Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis*, not an adult female. The latter are much more contrasting on head and underparts; juvenile upperwing-coverts with rusty fringes are also visible.'

'Fig. 21 [reproduced here] is not a Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotos*, but a juvenile Rüppell's Vulture *Gyps rueppelli*, about one year old, just starting its first primary moult. This bird has a long, bare *pinkish* neck (never seen in Lappet-faced), a bill that is already becoming *paler at the tip* and a plumage that is streaked throughout (not in Lappet-faced). A similar bird is leaning down in front of the landing bird, and on this bird some new, moulted upperwing-coverts with the diagnostic anchor-shaped shaft-streaks are visible. The other birds are Hooded Vultures *Necrosyretes monachus*, with one adult White-backed *Gyps africanus* in the middle, with its pale back to the photographer.'

Dick has just completed a new book on the flight identification of Western Palearctic raptors, in which both Rüppell's and White-backed Vultures are covered, so hopefully the identification of tricky juveniles should become easier.



Juvenile Rüppell's Vulture *Gyps rueppelli*, Siguiri, Guinea, 13 January 2011 (Arne Moeller)

Vautour de Rüppell *Gyps rueppelli* juvénile, Siguiri, Guinée, 13 janvier 2011 (Arne Moeller)

Reviews

Several books reviewed in the *Bulletin*, and many others, including the major African field guides and avifaunas, can be purchased via the African Bird Club website from WildSounds. The Club receives a donation for its Conservation Fund for every item purchased via the Books and Media Sales page. Click the 'Buy Now' button by the relevant book to check the latest price, purchase the item and help us to protect Africa's birds.

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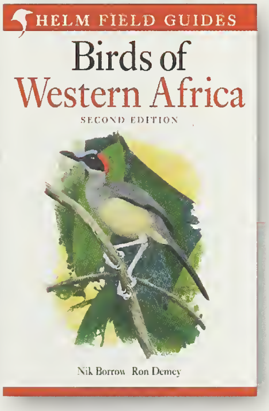
Plusieurs livres analysés dans le *Bulletin*, et beaucoup d'autres, parmi lesquels les guides et avifaunes les plus importants, peuvent être achetés via le site web de l'African Bird Club auprès de WildSounds. Pour chaque article acheté via la page « Book and Media Sales », le Club reçoit une donation pour son Fonds pour la Conservation. Cliquez sur l'onglet 'Buy Now' à côté de l'article recherché afin de vérifier le dernier prix, et aidez-nous à protéger les oiseaux africains en l'achetant.



Birds of Western Africa. Second edition.

Nik Borrow & Ron Demey, 2014. London, UK: Christopher Helm. 592 pp, 266 colour plates, c.1,300 maps. Paperback. ISBN 978-1-4729-0568-0. UK£40.00

The first edition of this book was published in 2004 (see review in *Bull. ABC* 14: 109–110). Ten years on, the second edition has been extensively revised, with all of the plates redesigned and the distribution maps now appearing opposite the plates. Many of the original illustrations are retained, but there are also many new ones and the plate redesign has meant that, whereas in the first edition there were 148 plates, the new edition boasts 266! Although the book includes several additional species recorded in the region for the first time in the intervening ten years, these represent only a relatively small number of birds, meaning that the additional plates have essentially been used to make the design appear much less cramped. So, for example, in the first edition 28 illustrations of 18 species of swifts were crammed onto one plate, whereas now 29 illustrations of the same 18 species are spread across three plates, permitting their much larger reproduction (the additional illustration depicts the upperparts of Black Spinetail *Telacanthura melanopygia*). This redesign has also created much more space for additional text and so, for example, whereas the text for Black Spinetail in the first edition amounted to six words and a few letter codes and symbols, in the second edition the text runs to 101 words and the coding has been dropped. This greatly expanded text provides much more information, and in full prose that is much easier to assimilate. The distribution maps have been completely re-drawn and Bob Dowsett is credited with a major contribution to this. Again, as an example, comparing the distribution maps for Black Spinetail, it is apparent that the range given has been expanded considerably in the south.

The authors have chosen to stick with a more traditional family order, rather than adopting some of the many recently proposed changes, as they consider these would be rather confusing to most users of a field guide. So, mercifully, falcons are still to be found next to the other raptors, rather than adjacent to parrots! For more specific taxonomic matters, the authors have chosen to follow the first volume of the fourth edition of Howard and Moore (Dickinson & Remsen 2013) for non-passerines, and a combination of sources including the third edition of Howard & Moore, the *HBW* passerine volumes and the IOC world checklist for the passerines (the passerine volume of the fourth edition of Howard & Moore was not published until after the work under review appeared).

All of the above changes result in major improvements over the first edition and have made what was already an excellent field guide significantly better. The only negative point concerns the colour reproduction. This was noted in the first review in this Bulletin and unfortunately has not been significantly improved upon in the second edition. A number of plates appear to be too heavily inked and the illustrations of some primarily black species show very little feather detail at all—just appearing as solid blocks of dark. Extreme examples of this are the storm-petrels, which compare poorly with the illustrations of these birds in the hardback edition of *Birds of Western Africa*, which was published in 2001. Nevertheless, this is an excellent field guide and can be thoroughly recommended to anyone visiting Western Africa.

David Fisher

Birds Île Maurice / Rodrigues

Birds of Mauritius and Rodrigues

Jacques de Spéville, 2014. 108 pp, 183 colour photographs, one map. Hardback. ISBN 978-99949-38-04-9. Mauritius 900 Rupees; UK price to be decided.

Since his retirement in 2010, Jacques de Spéville has combined his passion for birds and photography to produce a wonderful selection of photographs of the birds of Mauritius and Rodrigues. The objectives of this book are to showcase the best of his photographs, generate interest in the birds of Mauritius and Rodrigues, and provide funds for conservation.

The book's main content is spread across four sections that cover the islands' endemic, native, migrant and exotic bird species. Each of these sections has a short introduction followed by the photographs and a brief description of each species including its status. The quality of the photographs is very high indeed showing a wealth of detail, with the birds in good light.

The section on endemic birds will doubtless be of greatest interest to ornithologists and visitors to the islands, and includes all of the species unique to Mauritius and Rodrigues. As an example, there are four photos of Mauritius Kestrel *Falco punctatus*, three of perched birds and one of a juvenile (with prey) in flight. The species' short description includes the fact that it was close to extinction in 1974, with only four known birds including a single breeding female. Today, there are *c*.400 birds, a conservation achievement considered to be one of the world's most successful avian restoration projects.

Each of the endemic species is covered in a similar level of detail with some great photographs, my own favourites being a perched Pink Pigeon *Nesoenas mayeri*, a female Mauritius Cuckooshrike *Coracina* (*Lalage*) *typica*, an amazing close-up of a Mauritius Grey White-eye *Zosterops mauritianus*, a pair of the Critically Endangered Mauritius Olive White-eye *Z. chloronothos* and a Mauritius Fody *Foudia rubra*.

The section on native birds includes remarkable flight shots of both Mascarene Swiftlet *Collocalia francica* and Mascarene Martin *Phedina borbonica*. Any readers who have attempted to photograph swifts in flight will understand the technical difficulties as well as the demands of time and patience to achieve in-focus and well-lit images. Tropicbirds and terns are well represented in this section, but the rarest bird photographs are probably of a *Pterodroma* petrel on its nest and in flight, captioned as being a 'Round Island Petrel'. The status of *Pterodroma* species breeding on the island is currently something of a taxonomic conundrum, with Trindade *P. arminjoniana*, Herald *P. heraldica* and Kermadec Petrels *P. neglecta* all having been recorded, with the commonest of the three there, *P. arminjoniana*, hybridizing with both others.

The section on migrant birds consists mostly of photographs of Palearctic-breeding waders in non-breeding plumage. The standard of photography is in keeping with the rest of the book, with close-up views of Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*, Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponicus* and Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*.

The section on exotic birds will probably contain less of interest to readers of this review. Introductions of species native to Madagascar, continental Africa and Asia have all occurred, and it is a sad fact that most of these species are thriving, whereas endemic species have become extinct or have required intensive recovery programmes to save them.

The book's other sections comprise a short foreword by Dr Vikash Tatayah, Conservation Director of the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation, a prologue by the author and a brief introduction. Following the four main sections is a list of some of the vagrant species, a glossary of terms, maps of both islands showing the major birding areas, a bibliography and an index of scientific, English and French names.

The book is neither a field nor photographic guide, but an expression of the beauty of the avian world of Mauritius and Rodrigues as captured by the author. However, it does contain photographs of 58 species, i.e. nearly all species possible, if one excludes vagrants and migrant seabirds, making it very useful for identifying those birds most likely to be seen in the islands.

The book will be a useful addition to the libraries of those with a keen interest in the Mascarene avifauna. Birdwatchers and visitors with a more casual interest in birds will find it useful, while anyone with an interest in high-quality photographs of birds will enjoy this book.

Jacques intends to donate all proceeds from the book to the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation, the organisation that has done so much to restore the natural wildlife of Mauritius. This gives an additional incentive to purchase the book should one be needed.

John Caddick

The Search for the Rarest Bird in the World

Vernon R. L. Head, 2014. Auckland Park: Jacana Media. 244 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-1-4314-1092-7. UK£12.95

What birder can resist a book with the title *The Search for the Rarest Bird* *in the World*? This surely must be a ripping yarn of birding adventure and spectacular discovery. Before opening this small hardback volume, I tried to guess which species is its subject. Night Parrot *Pezoporus occidentalis*? Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris*? There are many potential candidates. In this book, however, it is Nechisar Nightjar *Caprimulgus solala*, an African nightbird known only from a single wing that was collected from a road kill in a remote part of southern Ethiopia more than 20 years ago. It has never been seen alive, despite a number of searches for it.

This book is the story of four friends on a mission to rediscover this mysterious bird. The scene is set by the author who describes his childhood passion for nightjars and goes on to relate various travels in search of nocturnal species such as the unique Oilbird *Steatornis caripensis* of northern South America. Eventually, our ornithological musketeers arrive in Ethiopia and set off on a dusty two-day journey south to the Nechisar Plain, an area far from the usual tourist routes. If they had failed to find their target, I doubt that this book would have been written, so I have probably not spoilt anyone's enjoyment of this tale by announcing that the expedition was successful—up to a point.

Sadly, the rediscovery at its heart, the brief sighting of an alleged Nechisar Nightjar, is far from convincing. Six seconds is not very long to see any bird, let alone a nightbird in artificial light—and a bird never knowingly seen alive before. A return visit the following night resulted in a further brief view and the adventurers even tried to capture the bird with a homemade net. An amateurish video of this attempt was posted on the internet not long after the expedition, confirming that their views of the bird were very poor. There were no conclusive photos, no detailed description, nothing to convince that it was this species, other than the fact it was large. But size is notoriously difficult to estimate at night and birds frequently look larger in the dark. We are not told how other species were eliminated.

The story is well told, but at times I found the writing contrived with rather too many metaphors. This is purple prose at its most purple. There are frequent dalliances into a fanciful and flowery language that can be somewhat distracting. I also found the sycophantic reverence of their team leader, Ian Sinclair, a trifle annoying, especially the dubious claim that he is the most famous birdwatcher in Africa.

The author repeatedly turns to the issue of which is the rarest bird in the world, examining a number of potential candidates and putting forward the case for it to be Nechisar Nightjar. The sad truth is that we simply don't know. Until Nechisar Nightjar is unequivocally rediscovered and studied, we have no idea of its true status. It may not even be a resident of the Nechisar Plain—the owner of the single wing that currently resides in the Natural History Museum in Tring could have been a migrant or even a vagrant. To date, no formal announcement or refereed scientific paper has been published about this 'rediscovery' of Nechisar Nightjar. If this book is intended to document the continued existence of this species, then it falls sadly short. But as birding adventure in one of the remotest parts of Africa, it is compelling.

Neil Roberts

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The *Bulletin of the African Bird Club* welcomes original contributions on all aspects of the birds of Africa, here defined as the area covered by Collar, N. J. & Stuart, S. N. 1985. *Threatened Birds of Africa and Related Islands: The ICBP/IUCN Red Data Book*. Cambridge, UK: International Council for Bird Preservation, namely continental Africa, Indian Ocean islands west of 80°E, e.g. Madagascar, the Mascarene Islands and Socotra; Atlantic Ocean islands on or east of the mid-Atlantic ridge, e.g. the Tristan da Cunha group, the Azores and the Canaries. Contributions will be accepted subject to editing and refereeing by independent reviewers, where appropriate. The Editorial Team will be happy to advise authors on the acceptability of material at draft stage if desired.

Submissions

Submissions are accepted in English or French and should be sent by e-mail to editor@africanbirdclub.org. All submissions are acknowledged. French summaries are required for all papers published in English, and vice versa. Those submitting papers should supply a summary for translation into English, or French, as appropriate. Unless a sketch map is provided as part of the article, place names should follow those on standard or readily available maps (preferably a recent edition of *The Times Atlas of the World*).

Style

Authors are requested to follow conventions used in the *Bulletin of the African Bird Club* and to refer to a recent issue for guidance. A detailed style guide can be obtained on request from the Editor.

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The role of the Representatives ABC Representatives support existing members by providing a local point of contact in their region and amongst other things: answer queries about the Club; solicit submissions for the Bulletin; arrange local meetings; recruit new members. They also have an important role in identifying projects that could benefit from the ABC Conservation Fund and candidates for the Supported Membership scheme.

Interested in becoming a Representative? We are seeking new Representatives in a number of countries. If you are interested in supporting and promoting ABC in your country please contact the Country Representatives' Coordinator (reps@africanbirdclub.org) attaching a CV and a statement of how you think you can develop the role. The Coordinator will be happy to provide further information if required.

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The Supporting Members scheme is a key part of the Club's strategy of encouraging the spread of knowledge and understanding of birds as widely as possible throughout Africa. The scheme enables Africans who would not otherwise have the resources to join, to become members of the Club. The scheme is funded by Supporting Members who pay a minimum of UK£30 to cover their own membership and the subscription of at least one African member. The money they contribute over and above their own subscription is placed in a special fund that is used to cover the membership expenses of African members whom they may have nominated, or who have been nominated by other Club members.

Although we have suggested a minimum of UK£30 to become a Supporting Member, any contribution is welcome. All members of the Club, even if they do not feel able to become Supporting Members themselves, are invited to nominate candidates for supported memberships. Candidates should be nationals of an African country, with a genuine interest in wild birds but without the resources to become members in their own right. Africans who think they may qualify are very welcome to put their own names forward, supported by a letter of recommendation from someone such as their employer, teacher or an officeholder in a local wildlife organisation.

The scheme now also includes clubs who wish to be affiliated with the African Bird Club in African countries where it is difficult for local individuals to become members in their own right. Clubs accepted for membership under the scheme receive up to six copies of each issue of the bulletin for circulation among their members. Instead of paying a membership fee, Clubs are asked to provide a short annual report on their activities that may be published in the bulletin. Clubs interested in becoming Affiliated Member Clubs are invited to apply to the ABC Secretary giving details of their membership, their constitution or a statement of their objectives and conditions of their membership, and their activities to date.

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AfricanBirding e-mail discussion list

Launched, in October 2000, by the ABC and the Pan-African Ornithological Congress, AfricanBirding or AB, as it is known, has become a useful forum for those interested in African birds. To join the discussion, which averages 1–2 messages a day, send a blank e-mail to AfricanBirding-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. You will then receive an e-mail instructing you how to join.

The Club also maintains a list of members' e-mail addresses. This list is confidential and used only for Club purposes, e.g. for informing members of upcoming events and news concerning the Club. It is not divulged to anybody outside the Club or used for commercial advertising. At present it includes addresses for about 50% of the membership. Please send any additions or amendments to the Membership Secretary: membership@africanbirdclub.org.